

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE PUBLICATION

Drama

THE QUARTERLY
THEATRE REVIEW

EDITED BY IVOR BROWN

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CALIFORNIA
JAN 30 1961

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THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

presents

CHRISTMAS TALKS FOR YOUNG PERSONS

Monday January 2 3 p.m.	ZEFFIRELLI'S SHAKESPEARE discussed by John Stride and Judi Dench now playing <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> at the Old Vic	Criterion Theatre
Tuesday January 3 3 p.m.	THEATRE MUSIC Talk by Christopher Whelen	Criterion Theatre
Wednesday January 4 3 p.m.	TWO GENERATIONS OF ACTING Sir Michael Redgrave Vanessa Redgrave	Criterion Theatre
Thursday January 5 2.30 p.m.	Theatre visit "A MID-SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM" W. Shakespeare	Old Vic

Season Ticket (for Three Talks) 10s.

Single Tickets for each Talk 4s.

Theatre Visit 4s.


Advance booking is strongly advised as accommodation is limited.

No seats are reserved at the Criterion Theatre.

Applications for tickets should be sent to:

The Administrator, British Drama League, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1

A stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed. J.D.L. members should state their membership number.





THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PATRON: H.R.H. QUEEN ELIZABETH, THE QUEEN MOTHER

BRIEF CHRONICLES

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

At Buxton this year, as at any Conference where delegates are both housed and work under the same roof, much of the livelier discussion took place between and after business sessions—mostly to the general advantage. Saturday's Open Forum for instance had thrown up several controversial points which remained unsolved at the end of the afternoon but which were approached on Sunday morning with an altogether fresher and subsequently more optimistic spirit.

It was most unfortunate that Ivor Brown through illness was not able to open the Conference or indeed attend any part of it. In his absence Robin Whitworth took the Chair for both the opening session and final discussions. Delegates sent to Mr. Brown their best wishes for his recovery as well as to the League's president, Lord Esher, who has recently undergone an operation in London.

Following the opening address delegates split up into three study groups, on the pattern of those which were introduced last year with success. These respectively were led by W. Bushill-Matthews on the Festival, Frances Mackenzie on 'Drama in Industry', and John English on 'Young People and the theatre.' This year's Open Forum was on 'The Amateur Theatre in the 60's' with speakers Norman Marshall, John English and John Allen. The third session was taken up with reports from the three convenors of the study groups with subsequent discussion on the points made on each subject, and concluded with further discussion on the problems raised by speakers in the Open Forum. The Conference concluded with a luncheon at which the Duke of Devonshire and the Mayor and Mayoress of Buxton were guests of honour.

'Drama in Industry' is a title covering an immense problem, one which is not likely to diminish if there is indeed to be more leisure time through constant advances in technology. Already of course there is a very large amount of dramatic activity in industrial undertakings throughout the country but it must be at once admitted that this is virtually all centred among the professional and clerical element rather than the much larger body of manual labour working on an hourly basis. It was important to find out first whether this vitally important section of the community was really interested, or could become interested, in participating in or creating its own theatre. Delegates agreed that a first step might be to offer much more opportunity, possibly through inclusion of theatre visits in holiday excursions, of getting to know what drama had to offer. Such visits could be followed by contact with those concerned with presenting them or acting in them. Both professional and amateur companies might be induced either to present plays in factories or to show there enough of their work to arouse curiosity. Authors known to be interested in working-class problems should be brought together in discussion with those whose lives they sought to present and illuminate. All such steps, the group felt, could help to focus interest and possibly indicate some way towards a much wider-reaching participation in the living theatre.

At least one-third of the delegates attended the Festival discussion which was lively and full of enthusiasm. An interesting start was given by James Cochrane (Chairman of the Northern Area), who talked about the successful 'Theatre in the Round' Festival at Scarborough last September. At the conclusion of

the proceedings it was made clear by W. Bushill-Matthews that:

1. Open Stage drama might be encouraged in the Stage One festivals, perhaps at first, upon a non-competitive basis;
2. An ideal pattern for Stage One Festivals would be to engage an Adjudicator willing and able to run a training course for the benefit of the Festival entrants as soon as possible after the conclusion of the local festival.

It has now been agreed not only at Fitzroy Square but in the Ministry of Education and other concerned bodies that the Children's Theatre cannot accurately describe that aspect of the League's work which is to do with drama among young people. The League cannot cease, of course, to take interest in the vast amount of work which is carried out in the earlier stages of education. The crucial time, however, is what can only be termed the 'gap', that period including the last few years at school and those following years when school facilities are no longer available but identification with drama groups composed of adults is not readily at hand. John English's study group postulated various methods by which it considered more might be done. It was recognised that the J.D.L. was already doing as much as its resources allowed and in fact very much more than the average League member realised. Answering specific points, it was possible to inform delegates that a special committee was being formed comprising of both adults and younger persons, that there was increased consultation with the Ministry of Education and that in general this whole field was a subject of priority attention by the Council.

Giving prominence to this activity among younger people, however, does not suggest, as at one point in discussion it was assumed by some delegates, that the firm backbone of the League contained in its adult membership had in any way diminished in importance. Saturday afternoon's speakers in the Open Forum were not followed by much discussion and the work of the Conference at the end of the afternoon seemed to be in a state of suspense largely caused by some delegates feeling, with some reason, that too much was made of the difference, if such there is, between the younger and the older elements of the League. During the Sunday morning session this atmosphere was largely dissipated by the recognition by several speakers that the theatre was a big enough field for a wide ranging difference in attitude and age.

Both evening visits of the Conference were to theatres, of types completely dissimilar in scope though of equal high quality, the Great Hucklow Village Players and the Library Theatre in Manchester. Dr. Peach's remarkable achievement in the remote countryside of Derbyshire must be a matter of considerable

interest (and sometimes envy) to amateur societies throughout the country. Delegates saw only one act of a new play in rehearsal, but this was enough to confirm that here was a product of enthusiasm and fine organizing powers, two qualities that do not always go hand-in-hand. Equally as stimulating was the performance of Mr. Behan's *The Quare Fellow* in Manchester; a far from easy play to sustain but most admirably presented and acted. It appears that the whole run of this play too had been sold out. These two highly disparate performances seem to have no relation with that dying living theatre about which we hear from the pessimists.

At the opening session of the Conference it was proposed by C. B. Purdom that a Resolution should be passed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the following terms:

This Annual Conference of the British Drama League welcomes the formation of the Joint Council of the National Theatre, under the Chairmanship of Lord Chandos, and the appointment of its Executive Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir Kenneth Clark; and, in view of the unanimous approval now given to the scheme, strongly urges Her Majesty's Government to take immediate steps to enable the National Theatre to be built and to be opened on the occasion of the Quatercentenary of Shakespeare's birth.

This was unanimously agreed.

Winter Activities

The League's Training Department is now fully embarked on its Autumn-Winter programme with students working on a Tuesday evening 'Project' programme which is based on a production of Brecht's *Lucullus* arranged by Pat Arnold with speech and narration under the direction of Kristin Linklater. The first 'Theatre in Action' week-end was held in October in association with the Mermaid Theatre. From mid-November until Christmas the training department is fully engaged both in Fitzroy Square and outside. A week-end each is given up to 'Drama in Industry' and a Playwrights' course in which latter both Lionel Hale and Norman Marshall will participate. The culmination of the present series of events will be after Christmas when the Junior Drama League has its Holiday Course. Associated with this will be the normal Christmas Holiday programme for young persons to be held at the Criterion, which will include talks by Sir Michael Redgrave and his daughter Vanessa, who are now appearing in Robert Bolt's play *The Tiger and the Horse* at the Queen's Theatre, on two generations of acting, Christopher Whelen, formerly director of music at the Old Vic and now responsible for a wide range of incidental music including that for the B.B.C.'s *Age of Kings* and *Paul of*

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE HOLIDAYS

It will once more be possible during 1961, in conjunction with the British Drama League, for Sir Henry Lunn Ltd. to offer holidays in various parts of Europe. Included in 1961 holidays are several places which have already proved very popular. In addition there is a holiday in Austria which has something of a theatre bias in that its locale, Traunkirchen, is only a short distance from Salzburg which is a festival centre renowned for its Opera, its fine orchestral concerts and solo recitals. Perhaps not so widely recognised are the performances of the Vienna Burgtheater on the steps of the Cathedral. Even apart from this there are performances of modern plays and of course the famous Salzburg marionettes.

The International Amateur Theatre Association intends to hold a festival at Monaco in September with participation by amateur societies from all over Europe. The British Drama League has not yet received full details but when more is known of the project it will be possible to arrange holidays by which League members may enjoy not only the normal amenities of a Mediterranean holiday but will also be able to see festival productions. Details of these holidays will be announced.

The Paris Theatre, although nearest geographically to our own, offers, through most of the year, a selection of plays whose type and range is in many vital ways quite different from that of London. The following details apply

to normal holidays in Paris but it should be possible if there is sufficient response for the British Drama League to arrange for theatre going parties to see not only the classic plays at the newly vitalised Comedie Française and the Theatre Nationale Populaire but also works of modern playwrights such as Anouilh, Marceau and Roussin.

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May 7, 14, 21, 28
June 4, 11, 18, 25
July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
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September 3, 10, 17, 24

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July 21; August 4, 18	... £42 18 0

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July 23; Aug. 6, 20; Sept. 3	... £53 10 0

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July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28; Sept. 4	...	£72 9 0

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Oct. 1, 8	£49 18 0
June 18, 25; July 2, 9; Aug. 27;	
Sept. 3, 10	£52 18 0
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I agree to accept on behalf of all members of my party, Sir Henry Lunn Ltd., conditions of booking as stated on their official Booking Form (Copy on request.)

Signature _____

Date: _____

Tarsus, on Theatre Music and Judi Dench and John Stride, this year's Romeo and Juliet, speaking of their reactions to working with Franco Zeffirelli. John Stride will also address the Junior Drama League during its course. This young actor who besides playing Romeo will also appear as Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and as Prince Hal during the present season has a most lively and intelligent approach to his work. The following was written by him for inclusion in a Junior Drama League Broadsheet but it was felt to be too interesting for such a relatively limited circulation and is therefore reprinted here.

*'Suit the action to the word, the word to the action'.
—Hamlet.*

Franco Zeffirelli's idea of what actions suit what words in his production of Romeo and Juliet at the Old Vic has brought him high praise and deep condemnation. Those who praise, admire the new life injected into an old favourite and those who condemn bemoan the loss of poetry and the physical 'ungainliness' of much of the acting.

The balcony scene serves as a suitable illustration. In this Romeo and Juliet traditionally are unable to touch each other because of the height of the balcony. One lady, who had seen many productions of the play, told me how she cherished the memory of one Romeo, unable to reach Juliet on her balcony, taking a handkerchief from her outstretched hand, kissing it, handing it back to her and then Juliet pressing lovingly to her cheek.

In contrast to such a graceful contact, in Zeffirelli's production Juliet asks, from her balcony, if Romeo loves her and, in an instant, he is clambering up a nearby tree, desperately trying to convince her of his love by smothering her with passionate kisses, breathlessly and awkwardly. This scene was described by critics as 'heartrendingly good', 'extremely ungainly', 'grave and beautiful', 'tedious'.

I have been asked who decided to play the scene in a livelier, lighter vein than is usual, the producer or the actors. For me the tremendous excitement of working with Zeffirelli was that nobody appeared to 'decide' such things. Once he had conveyed to us his ideas on style, mood and overall effect of the play and particular effect of the scene, he would leave it to us to find how we could best express ourselves in that vein. Many of the unconventional things came about in this way; less by detailed direction than by winding us up with excitement and enthusiasm and then putting us on stage like clockwork toys, to see what happened when we whirled around! Zeffirelli has great charm and generates contagious excitement about his work. He would talk of the characters in the play with a humour and imaginative flair which inspired actors to attempt things they would never have dreamt of doing.

Lack of poetry was the other main criticism. By this was meant, I assume, strict adherence to the verse form and full value to the 'purple passages'. In this case, I agree some poetry, but not all, has

been lost. Zeffirelli felt that what Shakespeare made people think, do and feel was poetry and if they were acted with vitality and truth then the play would surge into life as a poem in itself. I don't know if we have succeeded. You must decide if you see it.

However, approve or not, please, please don't write as one young lady did saying, 'Dear John Stride, I have just seen Romeo and Juliet and thought you were very good as Chorus in *Henry V* last season...' It doesn't help—it is no consolation.

John Stride

Overseas Visits

The St. Dunstan's Players which with their production of O'Neill's *In the Zone* won the Howard de Walden Trophy in the Festival British Finals were invited through the agency of the League to give performances in Denmark, and in Germany, in the course of international festivals at which other participating associations came from Belgium and the two host countries. At the first performance in Scheersberg the company was received with the closest attention followed by most enthusiastic applause. In Denmark the visit included not only the performance but various excursions into the surrounding country. The hosts spared no trouble and indeed no expense in entertaining their British and Flemish guests who seemed to find the hospitality almost overwhelming. During their time in Germany the company was taken on sightseeing tours in Flensburg itself and also in Schleswig. The third performance was again received with great enthusiasm and afterwards definite invitations to return were received from authorities in Germany, Belgium, and even Czechoslovakia.

One of the most noteworthy things about this visit incidentally is that two members of the St. Dunstan's Players, Mr. David George and Mr. Norman Searle, actually gave up their full-time employment in order to act with the group. Both had applied for leave for the purpose and both had been turned down. In the event neither has suffered, Mr. George has a new job in London and Mr. Searle has become a partner in a new printing firm.

The International Amateur Theatre Organization, on whose committee Frances Mackenzie represents the League, has invited English participation in a festival which is to be held together with its Conference in September in Monaco. It is hoped that selection of a team may be made in conjunction with the League's own One-Act Play Festival. At present further details are expected from the Association about the actual dates and length of the Festival. The League is arranging through Sir Henry Lunn, Ltd., a holiday programme in that area, to be enjoyed in conjunction with the Festival. Details of this will be announced when firmer information has been received.

Theatre in Australia

Visitors from other continents bring stimulus to theatrical life in Australia. We were fortunate to have as Kathleen Robinson Lecturers at the University of Sydney for 1960 first Robert Speaight, who took for his theme T. S. Eliot, and then Anthony Thomas, who could speak with authority on the potentialities from dramatic activity in boys' clubs. John Allen, after a strenuous half year as Unesco 'expert', has gone back to London, and the report of his findings is eagerly awaited.

We have just welcomed a Field Drama Supervisor, Sydney Risk of the University of British Columbia, who aims at seeing all he can in seven weeks of what is going on here, and from whom we have already gained a glimpse of the part played by Canadian Universities in fostering drama. Another North American we have enjoyed meeting is George Vane of the University of Minnesota.

B.D.L. (Australia), as the only body concerned with amateur theatre which is all-Australian and has international affiliation, finds its overseas correspondence increasing; recently we have been in contact with amateur organizations in France, Denmark, Poland and the State of Western Carolina—this last because the University there had been advised that we might be able to help them with the financial and geographical problems encountered in running one-act festivals!

An outstanding event of this year has been the first one-act play festival held in New Guinea, lasting for three nights and presenting nine entries from five towns. Doris Fitton of the Sydney Independent Theatre flew 2,000 miles to adjudicate it, and on her way back spent two days at Cairns, where the Little Theatre has acquired a site and is hard at work raising money for a building.

Some headway is being made in other parts of Australia in the provision of theatres. For instance, at Orange in the Central West of New South Wales and at Sydenham, an industrial Sydney suburb, the B.D.L. Do-it-Yourself principle is being practised by local groups in attempts to solve their housing problems. Orange, like Cairns, has already secured a site: the Pocket Playhouse at Sydenham has purchased the tiny Rechabites' Hall which has hitherto been its home for use as Workshop and Children's Theatre, and is campaigning to erect a theatre nearby which is to seat 250. In Melbourne the Council of Adult Education, in the reconstructed church which is now its community centre, has provided a first-rate theatre seating 400.

With assistance from the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust the Perth National Theatre has brought out to be Director Raymond Westwell, already known to Australians as a member of the Stratford Company which toured here in 1953.

E. M. TILDESLEY

National Festival 1960-1961

The Area Finals this season will be held as follows:

NORTHERN AREA

David Lewis Theatre,
Liverpool ... May 13th

WESTERN AREA

Jephson Gardens Pavilion,
Leamington Spa ... May 13th

EASTERN AREA

Scala Theatre, London ... May 29th

WALES

Coliseum, Aberdare ... May 13th

This year England will act as host for the British Final Festival, which will take place at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, on Saturday, July 8th. This will be the climax of the Festival season, and it is hoped that the teams taking part and their supporters will arrange to spend the whole week-end in Coventry to meet the other companies and make this a Festival in the true sense of the word.

Divisional, Area and British finalists will again benefit from the Awards generously offered by the Nestle Company.

Details of the Original One-Act Play Competition, run in conjunction with the Festival, may be obtained from the Administrator, 9 Fitzroy Square.

Festival of Original Full-length Plays

If your society is presenting a new play during the next six months you are invited to enter it for the League's Festival of Original Full-Length Plays, which will be judged in performance by John Izon. This year there is an added incentive to enter, as the Rother Players, who have won this Festival for the last three years, have most generously presented a Trophy to the League, which will be awarded annually to the winning company, to be held for one year. The Rother Trophy, which was bought in Rome, is a bronze figure of a young writer. In addition, the usual prize of £25 will be awarded and the winning play will be entered for the Charles Henry Foyle New Play Award. Further details from the Administrator.

Theatregoer's Club

The Theatregoer's Club recommenced activities in October and has so far seen Robert Bolt's *A Man for all Seasons*, which was followed by a party with the cast and the musical *Flower Drum Song*. November's plays were the newly-discovered *Platonov* with Rex Harrison, and what many critics consider to be the best play in London, *The Caretaker*. In December the plays will be Mr. Coward's *Waiting in the Wings* and possibly the Old Vic's *Romeo and Juliet*.

AUGUST STRINDBERG

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Drama Library

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FOUR IN HAND (2m., 2f.)	<i>Michael Brett</i>
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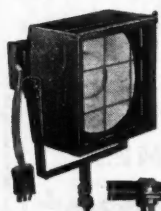
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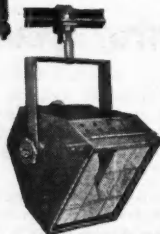
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NEW SERIES

WINTER 1960

NUMBER 59

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CHRISTMAS SHOWMANSHIP

DURING the Christmas season theatrical companies, amateur as well as professional, hope that the public spending spree will bring some benefit to their modest exchequers. The Christmas 'show', be it a pantomime, a home-made revue or a well-tryed and favourite play, can usually be relied upon to run for twice as long as a normal feature of the repertory: sometimes there is such eagerness for this seasonal levity that the attraction provided can last into the New Year for a number of weeks.

In that case many people who do not give their local theatre or team steady support have been drawn in for the special occasion. That they should be encouraged to come again is essential to the security of the enterprise. This is not easy to manage, but an alert management, which does not disdain the art of salesmanship because it values the art of the theatre, can use its Christmas gaiety to do some valuable recruiting.

Fortunately it is now being increasingly recognized that a theatre should be much more than an auditorium with a box-office in front of it. Other services and amenities can be laid on. Many playhouses are handicapped by old and shabby premises and lack of space: but where there is space, and especially in the theatres now being built, it must be recognized that to provide well-varied and courteously served refreshments at reasonable prices is to create the good will of the large public that Christmas brings along. This public can be persuaded that the theatre is not concerned only to sell drinks during the hustle of an interval at exorbitant charges, but is ready to cater properly and constantly and so to create a companionable atmosphere and to offer a wide welcome. Further, it may be possible, and if possible profitable, for the theatre to be used during the day as a place of call for a meal and also as a centre for midday entertainments, musical or otherwise, and for other gatherings. It is good news that Norman Marshall reports the general acceptance of this point in his article describing the York Conference on Theatre Architecture.

At the Mermaid Theatre in London, Bernard Miles gives away free a magazine programme of considerable size and quality, an article worth taking home for further reading. He can thus announce plans and create interest in a way that is likely to stick in the mind. Others will say they cannot afford to do this, but it is reasonable to claim that a person who has bought a seat is entitled to the necessary information about the play, the players and the production as part of his purchase. If a magazine-programme is charged for, it should be value for money and, if it is well edited, it will be a precious piece of propaganda.

To the usual wishes for prosperity in all productions during the coming holidays we would add a reminder that many playhouses, while serving their regulars well enough, have not broken down the hesitation of those who are patrons of the Christmas show only and regard the rest of the repertory as likely to be over their heads or beneath their notice. Christmas is nearly always an asset to the box-office for a month or so: it should be regarded not merely as the festival ending of a year gone by, but as a recruiting season for the year to come.

'ROMEO AND JULIET' at the Old Vic. John Stride, Gerald James and Judi Dench. Photograph by Houston Rogers.

PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

By J. W. LAMBERT

ENID BAGNOLD has written several plays which, whatever one's reservations, have in their highfalutin way a quality of their own: best-known of them *The Chalk Garden*. Tennent Productions assembled for her new play, *The Last Joke* at the Phoenix Theatre, one of their titled casts, led by two knights; there is a part for a Dame too, but for some reason this is played by Ernest Thesiger.

Picture an ageing Balkan princeling, living luxuriously in a London suburb. Having exhausted in his wealth and brilliance all that life has to offer, he has taken to thinking. His efforts to transcend commonplace reality have caused him to have a slight stroke. He now also meditates suicide, until news of a painting of his mother stolen long ago puts new life into him. Assuming a false beard and a tarboosh in order to impersonate a Levantine dealer, he sets off for the country house of the millionaire who keeps the picture hidden in his bedroom—who, in fact, stole it when he was a starving, beaten boy, because it symbolized 'gracious living'. Confronted in the middle of a vast ball given for his daughter, the millionaire tells his story; the prince invites him to keep the picture, and shoots himself on-stage. At which the final curtain falls, and so does the play, as flat as a pancake.

I use this novel phrase deliberately, since Miss Bagnold goes to comical lengths to avoid using any combination of words which might ever have been heard before. Her dialogue in *The Chalk Garden* was mannered; in *The Last Joke* it teeters along like Christopher Fry in stiletto heels, an affliction to the senses, an embarrassment to the mind. Sir John Gielgud, from whose lips the noblest of living sounds have flowed, speaks the death-hungry prince's crocheted lines with care, and acts in a

manner somewhere between his Joseph Surface and his valet in *Nude with Violin*. Sir Ralph Richardson, as the millionaire, presents a none-too-well articulated white-haired puppet; he moves with cautious dignity and handles the strange language with equal care, pausing not merely between each phrase, or even between each word, but between each syllable. Supported by a handful of other characters, each more gnomie than the last, these two conduct their incomprehensible manoeuvres against three sumptuous sets by Felix Kelly, leading us from the Chiswick drawing-room to the millionaire's mock-Gothic magnificence and out by moonlight to his garden, all too aptly equipped with a maze.

We have different comedies of manners today, and if it amuses you to call them comedies of bad manners, no matter. Take, for instance, *Billy Liar* at the Cambridge Theatre. As a play, adapted by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall from the former's novel, this engaging character-study is only partially successful; but it is the partial success that matters, not the partial failure that goes with it. The scene is a middle to lower middle-class (oh, these subtleties!) home in the North today. But Billy isn't in the least an essentially contemporary character. He is simply the boy who, having a powerful imagination, allows it to race ahead of reality with disastrous results. His talent for colourful improvisation leads him into fearful trouble with his family, with several girls, with his employers. What has to be decided here, of course, is the tone to be employed. Which shall take charge—farce, comedy, pathos, even a shot at tragedy as Arthur Miller would like us to see it? And here Messrs. Waterhouse and Hall, and Lindsay Anderson, their producer, have fallen



'BILLY LIAR' by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall at the Cambridge Theatre. George A. Cooper, Mona Washbourne, Albert Finney and Ethel Griffies. Photograph by Lewis Morley.

into confusion. The supreme theatrical skill—possessed notably by Chekhov, Pirandello, Anouilh—in blending these elements has eluded them. So knock-about is their sketch of home life, so caricatured are two of the three girls in Billy's life, that it is no wonder that audiences are confused. This threw a tremendous burden on Albert Finney; the role of Billy is large enough in all conscience, without his being required to fight the tone of the rest of the production. Sometimes therefore Mr. Finney had to bang over his transitions from farce to pathos harder than was really desirable; but how fine was his performance! Delicious in comic extravagance, uproarious in distraught improvisation, his broad battered face opening and shutting in zestful invention or wary withdrawal like a gnarled sea-anemone, he faced an angry father, a bewildered mother, a censorious grandmother, a sceptical chum and girls bovine, tempestuous or waiflike (this

last finely played by a promising young actress unfortunately called Jennifer Jayne) with equal resource; scored his greatest triumph when, alone upon the stage, he was able without words to mime his way into daydreams unimpeded by reality, and wrung, as he stood with reversed arms over an imaginary grave, a moment as truthful as it was theatrical for the sounding, between pursed lips, of the Last Post.

Another such character turned up at the Lyric, Hammersmith, in another adaptation—by Norman Rosten of Joyce Cary's early novel *Mister Johnson*, the story of a West African clerk thirty-five years ago who saw the white man's ways as the path to freedom of the spirit, and was carried by good intentions and optimism far down the road to Hell. In an ingenious setting by Reece Pemberton which embodied without curtain-fall jungle, office and bungalow, Frith Banbury, working with modest acting talent, gave the

little piece a lyrical flow, and Johnny Sekka as poor Johnson gave a lightweight dancing charm to the simple heart. No charm at all, but a familiar spiritual and material squalor, invested Tennessee Williams's one-act sketch, *This Property is Condemned* (Afts Theatre) in which a young American actress, Marcia Stillman, mouthed her way through another waif; this was one half of a grimmish double bill, the rest being Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*, a little tale of a nasty encounter in Central Park between a stolid middle-class chap and a mad beatnik-style rooming-house bore—not at all boring as presented by Kenneth Haigh in another of his studies in rattletrap rhetoric, while Peter Sallis gave a first-rate demonstration of passive acting as he sat on the bench and listened in growing embarrassment and horror. Neither of these little pieces actually meant anything; they might be compared, I suppose, to a shot of vodka compared to a slowly savoured bottle of wine.

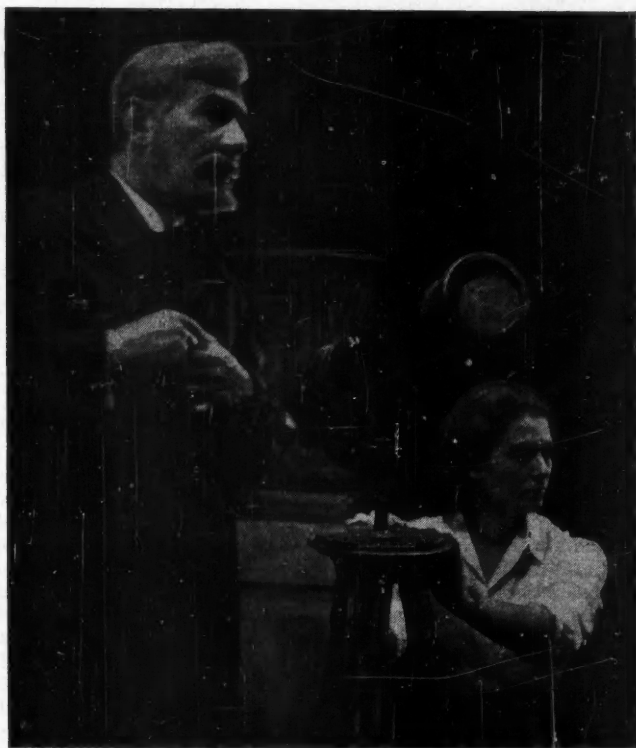
The wine in Robert Bolt's new bottle, *The Tiger and the Horse* at the Queen's Theatre, is thin, there's no denying. Using his familiar framework, the father of a family in difficulties, he has this time set out to portray not a dreamer, as in *Flowering Cherry*, not a great man in danger as in *A Man for all Seasons*, but—much more difficult—a hollow man. Jack Dean stands high in his University; he has behind him a fine record as an astronomer—but in effect he withdrew from the world many years ago; why, we are not told. In fact we are told almost nothing about him, and Sir Michael Redgrave needs all his resources to fill out the character to something like roundness. This he does in one scene of great beauty, when sitting with his young daughter in the garden he listens to her tale of woe—listens unwillingly, loosing off between whiles his own arrows of disillusion into the empyrean which no longer engages his interest. It is one of the defects of this play that this clever man can be stirred from his remoteness only by

events towards which he would surely have shown only a weary contempt—the prospect of becoming Vice-Chancellor, for example, or the news that his daughter was to have a child but did not wish to marry. Vanessa Redgrave as his daughter was well cast; her look of well-washed innocence offset her father's bearded resignation. Catherine Lacey as his wife, who, steadily getting dottier as the years have gone by, finally goes right off her head in a scene of some power which trembles on the brink of absurdity. Well, Mr. Bolt offers us a happy ending of sorts; and all in all seems to have softened up the rigour of his theme; and despite an attempt at contemporaneity with an anti-bomb petition and an angry young don from the provinces (played by Alan Dobie with rather stereotyped snarls and less development than Mr. Bolt has allowed for) he has this time, really, written only one of those plays which make the stupid feel intelligent.

Jack Ronder's is a name new to me, but on the strength of *This Year, Next Year* at the Vaudeville he seems likely to make a worthwhile member of the rather small team of good middle-of-the-road dramatists (Graham Greene, Mr. Bolt, N. C. Hunter, John Mortimer and, one may hopefully add, J. B. Priestley). Some of my colleagues have detected murmurs of subterranean incestuous Lesbianism in this story of two interdependent sisters, one smart and worldly, the other dowdy and homekeeping. Well, yes, in the remote sense that each in turn proves jealous of the other's sexual adventures, such as they are, and that neither, when it comes to the point, can face marriage. But such a sinister undertow is hardly necessary to an understanding of these unhappy women. Pamela Brown plays one with a positively metropolitan glitter, though the action is supposed to take place in a provincial town; Brenda Bruce, to my surprise, does not quite bring to the other the range of suppressed emotion of which she is so exquisitely capable, but in John Dex-

ter's direction maintains throughout, even in her brief, ill-omened, never-quite-believed-in flowering, an inner chill which damps the play a little. As the man she nearly marries Michael Gough offers the best performance I have ever seen him give. A disappointed

don's of his own novel *Naked Island*, came up at the Arts Theatre as another of those all-male plays—in this case set in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp—which we always do rather well, the company being led with quiet ease by John Neville. Mr. Braddon sees human



'THE TIGER AND THE HORSE' by Robert Bolt at the Queen's Theatre. Michael Redgrave and Vanessa Redgrave. Photo: Angus McBean.

drunk playing the violin in a café orchestra, he cringes, fawns, rages, collapses and recovers into kindness with masterly and touching sureness. In this play there are intelligence and feeling; not least in one excellently poised scene in which the elder sister, invested with all Miss Brown's enigmatic allure, makes hay of her flagging and bewildered lover.

Yet another adaptation, Russell Brad-

nature in rather over-simplified forms, which should suit the dramatic method but in fact does not. The struggle towards dramatic simplicity is a long and tough process of intense compression; this hard truth is never made plainer than in the lost art of satirical farce, two examples of which have come before us. At the Mermaid an extravaganza by Gerald Frow, *Mr. Burke, M.P.*, revived a notion with

which Peacock made play, though not a play, in *Melincourt*, that of making a monkey a member of Parliament. Mr. Frow's purpose, like Peacock's before him, is to have a swipe at almost everyone; in so doing he has infuriated some of my colleagues by satirizing not only what it is permitted to satirize but what it is not—by slinging mud not only at bishops and politicians and advertising men but at protest marchers and even Negroes. As a matter of fact he writes well in an undisciplined, amateurish way, and his lively entertainment, complete with skiffle group, is at the least quite good fun. This is more than could be said for John Arden's *The Happy Haven*, briefly at the Royal Court in William Gaskill's production. Five inmates of an old people's home scheme and counter-scheme as people will, old or not, who are shut up together. The dotty young doctor in charge thinks he has discovered an elixir of youth and proposes to experiment on them. They turn the tables on him. So: but why is the doctor made into a rugger-playing suburban mother's boy? Is Mr. Arden here satirizing the new technocracy? But if so, can he really be satirizing them on the grounds that they have non-U accents and turns of phrase and commonplace minds? The old folk were all played in masks—so carefully realistic that after a bit one forgot they were masks. Some of the old folks' plotting was amusing—notably that of Rachel Roberts, irredeemably avid, and Frank Finlay, crapulously malicious; and Peter Bowles made of the toothy medico (the very word) a painful study of a familiar type. But what Mr. Arden was about in this laborious extended revue sketch eludes me.

If one were to believe some credulous enthusiasts, one would suppose that Roger Planchon, in his version of *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, which came to the Piccadilly Theatre from Villeurbanne via Edinburgh, was inventing a new subtle and deadly satire of his own. In point of fact he too offers a piece of

jolly knockabout, making unbridled fun of Dumas, as down the centuries we have always enjoyed mocking our masterpieces. The knowledge that M. Planchon's political sympathies are far to the left, and that in his own theatre he is at pains to appeal to the largest possible audience, that is to say to the 'workers', seems to have persuaded some that beneath this hearty and good-humoured romp, performed by a large company with more zest than polish, there lies a Machiavellian and explosive political message.

One might as well try to read a deep social significance into Theatre Workshop's delightful *Sparrows Can't Sing*. This amiable string of sketches of East End life, by Stephen Lewis, is in fact enormously charitable. There is not a touch of anger or even protest in it, and the Man from the National Assistance Board (nicely sketched with edgy pomp by Roy Kinnear, who later throws in a splendidly wheezy tramp) is mocked with almost affectionate contempt—as well he might be, poor fellow, since he so obviously can't win against these quick-witted ignoramuses. Character studies abound, and for once all are good. The author himself contributes another wanderer whose pride in having always, whatever his ups and downs, had a room of his own, has about it, in its lank and toothless amiability, a touch of Beckett's poetry.

I thought of it when, later, watching *The Playboy of the Western World* at the Piccadilly. I wish I could share the general enthusiasm for this production from Dublin. But after all, Mr Lewis's Cockney seemed to me authentic; Synge's Irish is surely not. All its constituent parts may be, but . . . very well, this is a masterpiece. Is this then a definitive performance? No, it is not. Much of it is fine—not least Donal Donnelly's Christy Mahon, the Playboy himself, basking in the glamour conferred by his story of killing his father, cowering in collapse, goaded to a moment's real revolt by his father, still very much alive. Mr. Donnelly's lithe



'PLATONOV' by Chekhov at the Royal Court Theatre. Rex Harrison, Elvi Hale, Graham Crowden and Mary Watson. Photograph by John Timbers.

performance comes straight from the *Commedia dell'Arte*; paint him white and this is Pierrot. But what shall I say of Siobhan McKenna's Pegeen? Well, perhaps Miss McKenna has become too much the great actress to enter into this girl now. She is a very glum girl; and however correct her accent it is not because it is so broad that she is difficult to understand, but because she does not phrase rhythmically. Her joyless fascination with Christy does not lift the heart; and the poignancy of her loss is not brought home when she speaks her famous last line—'Oh, my grief, I've lost him surely. I've lost the only play-boy of the western world'—standing quite still, without a flicker of the wild lamentations Synge asks for, her back to the door, her face illuminated not by grief but by a spotlight.

Back to the Old Vic, by public demand we are told, comes Stephen Spender's adaptation of Schiller's *Mary Stuart*. My voice was not among the clamouring thousands; if it had been I should not have been content with this reach-me-down revival, in which

Valerie Taylor as Elizabeth and Gwen Watford as Mary might have done better if they had reversed roles. Much more interesting was *Romeo and Juliet*, produced and designed by Franco Zeffirelli. His Verona creates an overall impression of bells and dust. He repeats his ingenious effects of overlapping realism—but here sometimes a little tiresomely; I do not care to have to listen to lines spoken against illustrative off-stage clatter; least of all when the cast speaking it is as modest as this one. Judi Dench's Juliet, blanced and mothlike, was most effective where Zeffirelli's direction was most novel: in the balcony scenes, where Juliet fluttered above the hard-pressed climber, John Stride's Romeo; and alone, twisting and turning upon her bed, the very embodiment of timorous desire embracing not merely Romeo but an unknowable destiny. The lovers' tragedy was thrown away by the savage cutting of the last act, effective only when it left Peggy Mount's Nurse, in general too worried to be ample enough, mourning silently in the emptying

tomb. Zeffirelli's treatment of the young men of Verona—turning them into slouching grammar-school boys rather than young bloods—is at any rate in tune with our times if not altogether with Shakespeare. Alec McCowen's Mercutio contributed as he should a touch of intellectual aristocracy, but his attempt to speak the Queen Mab speech as though improvising failed as such attempts always must fail.

Perhaps Tony Britton was attempting something of the sort in John Fernald's production of *The Seagull* (also at the Old Vic) for his Trigorin, the weak-willed dedicated writer who knew that he was not quite as good as he should be, remained throughout a baffling figure, though at moments, notably in his first long meeting with Nina, he played with delicacy and feeling. I put the blame for this uncertainty on Mr. Britton because his producer, after all, knows his Chekhov, and his own mind about Chekhov, as well as any man in England. Mr. Fernald's *mise en scène*, in fact, was in all respects admirable. His Arkadina, Judith Anderson, was, to put it mildly, clear-cut—actress, *grande dame* and vampire. His Nina, Ann Bell, was unable to develop the girl in adversity, but appealing. His Konstantin also remains something of a puzzle: Tom Courtenay's performance was forceful, but I think it was a mistake to equate an angry young Russian of the nineteenth-century upper classes with an angry young man from the twentieth-century English lower classes, midlands accent and all.

Never quite successful, never to be missed, *The Seagull* remains a challenge to players and audience alike. Hardly less so is Chekhov's very early play, long enough to run for some six hours, and never fitted out with a title, from which Dmitri Makaroff has quarried the version called *Platonov*, and which the English Stage Company deserves all possible praise for putting on at the Royal Court. Not less laudable is their success in persuading actors in great

demand elsewhere to appear in their adventures—Sir Laurence Olivier in *The Entertainer* and *Rhinoceros*, and now Rex Harrison in *Platonov*. Platonov, a man fatally attractive to women, and fatally complacent, has abandoned a brilliant academic career and relapsed into village schoolmastering, expressing himself only by scandalizing his homespun neighbours by his outspoken bitterness. He has equipped himself with a nice little devoted wife, but is hopelessly involved with two other women—a penniless landowner and a girl who was his pupil at the University. Out of this situation and a host of comical-pathetic minor characters the young Chekhov spins no end of a yarn. He has not yet distilled for himself the last essentials of human weakness and Russian life—the distances, the circumscription, the boredom—which in his later work he was to make universally valid; but they are all there.

Richard Negri supplies some splendid realistic decors—above all a forest clearing with a railway line running down to the footlights, along which, as Platonov's anguished wife stretches herself with her neck upon the rail, we first hear, then see a train stertorously approaching. Rachel Roberts swirls through the play as the shackled tigress of a landowner; George Murcel contributes vast bulk and an authentic accent to a brigand who loves her and hates Platonov—a rather touching sketch of inarticulate power who I think does not recur in Chekhov. Elvi Hale only once or twice topples into caricature as the ex-student, coldly piquant, for whom passion is an instrument of power. Among the crowd—excellently manipulated on a small stage by George Devine and John Blatchley—Rex Harrison moved in shambling command. Clinging to his old familiar gesture of bunching his fingertips on his forehead, pivoting from fool to worshipper, he steered the play unfaltering over shallows of bathos and rapids of absurdity. Timing every phrase with a skill as exquisite as it is

rare, sometimes muttering, sometimes shouting, yet always audible, flicking a comic aside on its way without the slightest fuss, bickering, brooding, being seduced, being cruel, being kind, and always slipping, slipping, he made of this wretched man one of the finest comic performances of our time. Haggard,

dishevelled, drunk, he could snatch a gleam of sardonic self-contempt out of the shadows, and go down into the pit again—only to climb out, that much wearier, that much shabbier in spirit, and knowing it. Mr. Harrison steadily acquires not merely command, which he has long had, but stature.

THEATRE DESIGN

By NORMAN MARSHALL

In September the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at York held a Conference on the Architecture of New Theatres. The British Drama League asked Mr. Marshall to attend as an observer. Below are his impressions.

IN thirty years only three professional theatres have been built in England.

Now, rather suddenly and unexpectedly, there are several theatres on the drawing boards and a surprising number of Civic Authorities are contemplating following the example of Coventry and building civic theatres. Judging from the York Conference we have been caught unprepared for this sudden activity. For years, in books, articles and lectures we have been peacefully theorizing about the theatre of the future and researching into the theatres of the past, but it has all been a little unrealistic, because few, if any, of our theatrical theorists expected to be faced with a revival of theatre building in this country—a country which has closed or pulled down nearly 500 theatres in the last forty years.

The York Conference reflected this lack of realism. A lot of time was devoted to the theatre of the past (the Greek theatre, the primitive theatre, the medieval theatre, the Elizabethan theatre, even the Tibetan and the Bali theatre), and a lot more time was given to discussing the theatres of the future, but hardly any was spent examining theatres recently built and now in use.

For instance, in Germany approximately one hundred theatres have been built or completely rebuilt since the

war, but only two speakers mentioned the German theatre and both seemed to have the impression that they were stuffed full of elaborate, expensive and unnecessary mechanism. That may be true of a few of the German theatres, but there is immense variety in the design and equipment of their new theatres and what does not seem to be realized over here is that the chief contribution of the Germans to theatre design has been their efforts to smooth away the line of demarcation between actor and audience so that stage and auditorium merge almost imperceptibly into one another.

The majority of the audience at York consisted of architects and architectural students. They were, I found, disappointed that there was no session devoted to an examination of Coventry's Belgrade Theatre and London's recently built Royalty Theatre. What they would have liked would have been not just a lecture from the architects of these theatres but evidence of how far they satisfy those who work in them and those who go to see performances in them. It is common knowledge that mistakes have been made behind the curtains of both. Many of these mistakes have been due to a failure to seek expert advice from representatives of the stage-managers, producers, actors and theatre technicians. At Coventry

some of the most lamentable inadequacies of the stage and its surroundings are the consequence of a last-minute reduction in the budget which converted what would have been a fine stage into an extremely awkward one.

During the five days of the Conference a lecture by Mr. Flidir Davies, the architect of the Mermaid, was the solitary session which dealt with a recently built theatre. Mr. Richard Leacroft, just returned from the U.S.A. where he had been making a survey for the R.I.B.A. of the open and 'flexible' stages, showed a large collection of photographs and plans of these theatres, nearly all of them built for amateurs, most of them at a cost far beyond the wildest hopes of any English amateur. Mr. Leacroft's slides and descriptions were immensely interesting and stimulating, but what one badly wanted to know was what were the advantages and disadvantages of these very varied stages, what sort of plays were seen to best advantage in them and what plays suffered by being produced in them. It was unreasonable to expect Mr. Leacroft to answer these or many other questions one had in mind because it would have meant him spending several months in America studying actual productions in these theatres and talking at length to the people working in them. Nevertheless it is essential that if we are going to build new kinds of stages in this country we must have detailed and unbiased information of the extent to which unconventional theatres in other countries have proved to be workable.

The theatre of the future (so far as England is concerned) was represented by Mr. Alfred Emmet, showing the plans for the Questors Theatre, Mr. Michael Warre, describing the immensely ingenious 'convertible' studio theatre which L.A.M.D.A. is going to build, and Mr. Peter Moro, architect of the theatre which is to be built (at least, we hope so) at Nottingham, a theatre which will be easily and simply convertible from a proscenium theatre

into an open-stage theatre. It is not possible to build a two-purpose theatre without making compromises which inevitably to some extent impair the efficiency of the theatre for either purpose, but so far as one could judge from Mr. Moro's plans he has achieved as workable a compromise as is ever likely to be reached.

There were ardent advocates at the Conference for what was described as 'pure theatre'—in other words the non-scenic theatre. To many the obvious attraction of this kind of theatre is its comparative inexpensiveness compared to other forms of theatre. Its most persuasive advocate was Mr. John Neville, who declared that he would be happiest acting on a bare platform, relying upon the imagination of the audience to supply everything else. Personally, I find the idea of 'pure theatre' chillingly bleak and austere and altogether too cerebral. I am not denying that it is very desirable that we should have a few theatres of this kind but I do not believe that such a theatre can appeal to more than a minority audience, once the novelty has worn off. If people are to be lured from their television sets into the theatre they must be given much more richness and colour and variety than 'pure theatre' can provide. After some over-extravagant claims had been made for this sort of theatre the Conference was brought back to reality when Mr. Michael Warre, asked if he 'believed in scenery', simply replied that there were a great many plays which could not be performed without scenery.

The proscenium theatre, contemptuously referred to as 'the peep-show theatre', was hardly dealt with and there were the usual happy prophecies of its imminent demise. For fifty years theatrical theorists have been making this erroneous prophecy. There is no doubt that whatever other kinds of theatres are built in the future there will still be proscenium theatres amongst them—or rather modified forms of proscenium theatre. It would have been

more realistic if the Conference, instead of assuming that the proscenium theatre has no place in the theatre of the future, had faced up to the fact that during the past twenty years a large number of proscenium theatres have been built all over Europe and had studied what innovations have been made in the design of them. Listening to some of the more dogmatic assertions about the form which the theatre of the future must take I was reminded of what Reinhardt said at a rather similar conference:

It would be a theory as barbaric as it is incompatible with the principles of theatrical art, to measure with the same yardstick, to press into the same mould, the wonderful wealth of the world's literature: The mere suggestion of such an attempt is a typical example of pedantic scholasticism. There is no one form of theatre which is the only true artistic form. Let good actors today play in a barn or in a theatre, tomorrow at an inn or inside a church, or, in the Devil's name, even on an expressionistic stage: if the place corresponds with the play, something wonderful will be the outcome. All depends on realising the specific atmosphere of a play, and on making the play live . . . Therefore, do not write out prescriptions.

There was one feature of the theatre of the future about which the Conference was completely unanimous. Theatres must be places where the audiences can spend their whole evening, not just arriving in time for the play and then scurrying out again at the fall of the curtain in search of a meal or a drink. There must be restaurants where playgoers can eat before or after the performance, there must be snack bars as well as restaurants, the bars where drinks are served must be ample and comfortable and there must be sufficient room in the foyers and corridors for the audience to be able to move about and mingle with one another without being uncomfortably crowded together as they are in most of our theatres today. The restaurants and bars must be open during the day so that people can use them not only on the occasions when they are going to see a play but can come to regard the theatre building as

a part of their everyday lives. The Belgrade Theatre is admirably designed for this purpose and so is the Mermaid, where the bars open at 11.30 in the morning. Mr Elidir Davies approvingly described the Mermaid as 'a theatre inside a public house'.

Looking back on what I have written I fear I may have given the impression that the Conference was too theoretical, too impractical. It was not so. Every lecturer was, in his own sphere, a practical man of the theatre, and all twelve of them spoke on their own subjects with the utmost clarity and authority. There was a particularly valuable talk by Mr. Donald Barron on the appalling problems facing anyone who has to design a multi-purpose school hall, and a very informative lecture by Mr. E. Williams on 'Requirements for Public Safety'. Mr. Stephen Joseph on the subject of Central Staging was all the more persuasive because he resolutely refused to allow his own partisan feelings to over-colour his lecture, which was linked with a visit to his theatre-in-the-round at Scarborough.

I very much doubt if anyone could have gathered together a better or more representative panel of lecturers for the occasion. But the greatest value of the Conference was that it revealed the appalling paucity in this country of detailed information about the new theatres of many different kinds which have recently been built all over the world. Plans and photographs are not enough. What is urgently needed is another conference to discuss how first-hand information can be gathered about some of these theatres and where the money is coming from to finance such an undertaking. It will be a sensible economic proposition because it will save us from making many costly mistakes in the building of our new theatres. Theatres have long lives and a mistake, once perpetrated, remains for a hundred years or so unless the building is drastically reconstructed at very great cost.

THEATRE, PRESS AND PUBLIC

By IVOR BROWN

THE sudden disappearance of the *News Chronicle* and the *Star* naturally created great sympathy for the newspaper workers of all ranks who lost their occupations overnight. But there are further dismal aspects of these lethal mergers and absorptions in Fleet Street and other centres of newspaper production. The readers, as well as the writers, are deprived when these casualties occur and the influence of the surviving papers which acquire a still larger public must obviously become stronger. Those, for example, who write about and criticize the arts become less in number and more in influence. Never have so few given advice to so many.

Forty years ago Londoners, or those who in and around London got the London editions of the morning papers, had at their immediate convenience nine daily and seven evening choices in which there was serious dramatic criticism. The 'tabloids' may be excluded since they are more concerned with personalities than with plays. These choices have now been reduced to six morning and two evening possibilities. (The national morning papers often print their theatre notices a day late for those readers who do not get 'the late London' edition. This expands critical influence in a very important way in the case of the theatre, since the London playhouses owe a large amount of their support to visitors to London.) Meanwhile the population of Greater London has increased enormously as have the circulations of the surviving newspapers. A sale of nearly a million and a quarter would have seemed an impossible triumph to the owners of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1920, nor would the owners of the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* have dreamed in their most hopeful moments of not only topping

the half-million mark but of approaching the million.

Obviously, then, the criticism of the arts and entertainments has passed into far fewer hands with largely extended influence. The dramatic critics of the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* now address a readership whose numbers probably touch six million in the areas reached by editions printed in London. These figures must be guess-work since nobody knows how many people look at each copy sold. But if we leave the detailed arithmetic aside, there is no denying the fact that not only the financial life of the theatre but the reputations of dramatists and players are increasingly dependent on the verdicts of a handful of people. It is also true that those people (and they are always many) who regard dramatic criticism as a job just suited to themselves have less chance than ever of satisfying their ambition. For years posts of this kind have been dwindling and they have now sunk to their lowest. The only good news for readers who like a variety of opinion is that the new *Sunday Telegraph* will arrive in January. But it is more obvious than ever that Mr. Coward's well-known advice to Mrs. Worthington about a career for her daughter applies to the young of both sexes, and now must include the Press as well as the stage.

It must not be assumed that all or even a majority of the readers who make up a vast circulation look at theatrical notices or, if they do look, are decisively influenced by the verdicts which they contain. Many plays have flourished abundantly after a series of chilly or even strongly hostile notices. Some of the longest runners like *The Mousetrap* and *Salad Days* were not acclaimed at the start. Recently Noel Coward's *Waiting in the Wings* and an

American musical *Flower Drum Song* have shown that public support was not to be deflected by snorting derision. There is always the chance that a play can survive what is called 'stinking notices', but it will need both large confidence and large capital to carry on until a bad Press reception has been forgotten and the word-of-mouth criticism of those who have seen and liked the piece begins to be effective. A fortnight after production word-of-mouth is the only thing that matters since the opinions of dramatic critics are quickly forgotten. Bad word-of-mouth can be as fatal to a play which got good notices as a good report in conversation can be nourishing to a piece that was critically hammered.

Word-of-mouth means individual opinion and the verdict of the customer who has paid for a seat, which is welcome. It would be especially disastrous, in view of the diminishing number of critics writing for ever-mounting circulations, if those professional judges were taken as infallible arbiters of what is to be enjoyed. They have inevitably their prejudices and their favourite kinds of theme and treatment. It is an important function of newspaper criticism to let the public know that the play is there and what it is about. The critic's own valuation is necessary, that is to say if Press criticism is necessary at all, which is doubtful. Shakespeare managed to get on without it and all modern workers in the theatre, authors, actors, directors and managers, must envy Shakespeare his freedom from the agony of waiting for the morning, evening and Sunday papers and then the weekly reviews, and freedom also from getting one 'stinker' after another. He had only to put up with the talk of the town and there were no printed words to rankle in the memory. But we cannot go back to that and we can only hope that the Press mergers and the silencing of the small voice will tend to stimulate independence of judgment among playgoers who will not be frightened out of going to see a play because a couple of critics,

whose previous experience of the theatre may be small enough, have slighted it.

A dramatic critic is himself a worker in the industry of entertainment, since newspapers must attract readers as well as inform them. He will not be employed, especially in the case of the largest circulations, if he is a dull dog: brightness there must be, and unfortunately it is much easier to achieve readability by a smartly phrased attack than by critical approval. It is far simpler to get a name as a sharp-tongued knocker than as an owner of common sense and courteous expression. So the temptation to be clever at other people's expense is inevitably a strong one since millions of injudicious readers are likely to find a sarcastic notice more enjoyable at a brief glance than a sympathetic assessment. Moreover, critics send in their copy and the headlines are supplied by sub-editors usually working in a hurry. The choice of the captions may accidentally work against the play since one paragraph of censure may be stressed by the headline and two paragraphs of praise overlooked. There are numbers of people who will look at a headline and then read only some or none of what follows.

The readers of newspapers can as individuals do nothing to stop the destruction of newspapers by economic conditions and by the determination of the big advertisers to support only the giants. What they can do is to realize that there are no eternal rights and wrongs in matters of taste, in which the approved arbiters of one generation often differ violently from those of another. A critic is only delivering the opinion of one person and the fact that he is now offering that opinion to ever-increasing millions does not make him in any way more learned or percipient. A sensible critic realizes that his primary job is to interpret and introduce the best when he sees it, to be fair to the next-best too, and especially to notice the good things so easily overlooked whether in the writing or performance of a play, e.g. the acting of a

minor part. Denouncing the silly, the feeble and the ugly is part of his duty, but much less important. He does not want to be regarded as a dictator, and he knows that there is too much public readiness to accept him as a know-all. It is more and more the business of the playgoer to use his own mind, make his own experiments and to decide that,

since the professional critics are now so few and writing for so many, it is essential to the life of the theatre that the critic should himself be more critically regarded by the public and his power diminished by the reader's increasing scepticism as to the value of sweeping judgments which read like the commands of omniscience.

THEATRE IN SCOTLAND

By ROBERT KEMP

LET me at once assure the reader that I shall do my best to avoid the keenings which tend to be heard when the subject of the theatre in Scotland is mentioned these days. Not that there isn't plenty to wail about, but the grounds for lamentation are financial. The spirit of the directors seems to be unusually adventurous, and there is no lack of enthusiasm and talent among the actors. Indeed, it seems to me very precious, and our endeavour must be to see that lack of finance does not stifle it as it has stifled so much that was good before today.

Looking back on my own connection with that somewhat mystical body, the Theatre in Scotland, I can now see clearly that it is divided into three phases. In the first, when I was without direct responsibility, I was apt to propound remedies which had only to be applied to the patient and all would be well. In the second I was so misguided as to make myself, as chairman of a long-suffering board, responsible for the running of a theatre company. That was when I learned what it meant to waken at three o'clock in the morning and lie worrying for a couple of hours about the money. In the third phase, through which I am passing at the moment, I have realized that instability is the distinguishing mark of the theatre, and am looking to see if there is any way of changing that.

My old friend Moray McLaren frequently reminds me of 'that neglected theological virtue, Hope', and I am bound to confess that her blindfold figure has often been all that shielded me from despair. Just when things looked blackest, we have had our successes, and there has been money, a little money, again. But I feel that the theatre ought no longer to be the victim of that hand-to-mouth way of life.

It is sometimes forgotten how young the Scottish professional theatre is. All the professional companies have been founded in the second half of my own lifetime. And they have not always been in the dumps. There was a period only a few years ago when I felt sure they had weathered the impact of the new household toy, television. Then we were hit, not so much by commercial television, as by the intense rivalry between the two networks. A viewer is flattered to have two systems fighting for his attention.

But that is not all. Simultaneously there has been a change in the taste of the English theatre. It has had the encouragement of the critics, has almost been created by them. But the type of play which has emerged seems to appeal to a minority, which may be a substantial one in London, but which seems sparse when it comes to finding an audience in cities of smaller population. I have no doubt that many of the old

faithful were repelled by these plays, and so a wedge was driven into the body of the theatregoers. This has been represented as the outcome of a conflict between youth and age, between the middle class families who, until recently, have been those with the habit of theatregoing, and some vague new rootless class. I doubt if it is as easy as that.

There has also been a drift south of some of our best actors—actors trained in the Reps. here. One certainly does not blame them. We have been unable to pay high enough salaries all the year round. Sound broadcasting, once a valuable staff, has no longer the money for the dramatic enterprises of former days and B.B.C. Television has been very quiet, dramatically speaking, in Scotland. As for the commercial station, it has been on the air for over two years and has itself mounted only a couple of plays, at the time of writing. This means that actors cannot pick up those extra fees which come their way in London. When we have tried to bring an actor home for a spell, we find he dare not be away from his London address for fear of losing the 'contacts' which he has built up. Yet many of these actors tell us they are not altogether happy, facing a career of well paid but insignificant 'bits'.

There appeared only the other day the Annual Report of the Arts Council, some words from which sufficiently express the proportions of the present crisis:

Attendances at the theatres in Edinburgh and Perth had already begun to fall off in 1958; in 1959 these two theatres suffered further decreases in the number of seats sold, the average weekly drop being fifteen per cent at Perth Theatre and ten per cent at the Gateway Theatre in Edinburgh. . . . For the year which ended on March 31st, 1960, audiences at the Dundee Repertory Theatre fell by twelve per cent of the previous year's average, while at Glasgow the Citizens' Theatre showed a drop of nine per cent.

I should add that the Scottish repertory theatres receive grants ranging from £6,500 (for tours as well as for the resident company) to Perth Theatre, to £2,750 to the Gateway. The total of

grants by the Scottish Committee of the Arts Council for all theatrical purposes is just over £16,000. From one point of view, that is a lot of money; from another, it is the paltriest of chicken-feed. But all agree that it is at least public money, and that everyone must enquire closely whether it is being spent to the best advantage.

When I myself served on the Scottish Committee, we had inherited a policy, which still seems to me a wise one, whatever difficulties it may be encountering now. This was to support the theatres which had been brought into existence by local enterprise, by paying them subsidies which would bridge the gap between receipts and the expenditure necessary for the maintenance of a high standard. This is the gap which is widening towards disaster, because costs are rising while receipts drop. So a sensible policy is tending to degenerate towards the unsatisfactory expedient of trying to plug an ever widening breach. I say unsatisfactory because the time is past when it was enough to think of the spending of this public money in terms of bare rescue operations, and from the other side there may come a breaking point in the devotion of those public-spirited men who form the boards of our repertory theatres.

On the subject of money, a few comparisons may be instructive. This year's expenditure on the Scottish Theatre is, as I said, £16,354, of which £15,250 goes to the theatres I have named. The Edinburgh Festival Society, which comes before the public for three weeks of the year, receives £12,000. The rent, rates and maintenance of the London headquarters of the Arts Council in St. James's Square are £15,551—a little more than the Scottish theatres together receive. The office, travelling, entertainment and sundry expenses account of the same headquarters show another £15,091. Now I want to be quite clear on one point. I am not complaining of the amounts spent on these other purposes. But they do underline the smallness of the sum spent on the theatre in



'MASTER JOHN KNOX' by Robert Kemp at the Gateway Theatre, Edinburgh. The aged John Knox with his Scottish Lords and the Shipmaster. Photo: J. T. Knight, Musselburgh.

Scotland—costly institutions, keeping open for a large part of the year and with relentless overheads which must be met.

If the Arts Council suddenly withdrew its support the Scottish National Orchestra would be dead and gone in a moment. The same, I fear, would now be true of these four theatres, two of which were able to carry on without subsidy in the past. It seems to me that the problem facing the Scottish Committee is whether to continue with subventions which do no more than ensure a continual state of crisis, or to try to work out some scheme, as was done with Covent Garden in London, where a realistic basis was found for the operation and financing of the company.

If the four companies in the cities have a similar history of struggle, there is a rosy gleam in the north, where the success of the Pitlochry Theatre often recalls to my mind a conversation with Tyrone Guthrie in which he told me his belief that theatregoing habits were changing, and that the future lay more with the summer festival than with the old winter-evening outing. One cannot deny that on a Scottish winter night

there is a strong temptation to stay by the fire in the knowledge that the television set will oblige with something to look at. I recall looking at my own set one evening of sleet, as I was about to leave for the theatre, and finding that Hancock, at his funniest, occupied the half-hour before our curtain-up. It did not surprise me to find that the 'door' was a wretched one.

Yet the directors are as lively as anyone could wish. As I write the Citizens' has finished *Hamlet* and has embarked on Ionesco. The Gateway, after a *Shrew* which drew 'rave' notices but not capacity audiences, are performing my own Knox play, which they also follow with Ionesco.

The close ties binding the professional and the amateur theatres, despite all jealousies and resentments, have been underlined by the similar problems which the amateur companies have to meet. Whatever the shortcomings of both, most people are convinced that a further weakening of their place in the community would be a grave social loss. In Edinburgh, for example, it was often to the amateurs that we looked for the performances of plays which would have

been suicide to us.

Both types of theatre have to contend with the 'creaming' of the repertoire by television. We live in a world in which the commonest remark is 'I saw it on TV'. Very often the next sentence is 'I

hated it so much I never want to see it again', or 'It was so well done I don't want to see it again'. Until the theatre can command *exclusive* material it will remain at a deadly disadvantage in dealing with its wealthy rival.

THE HEART, MASTER PAGE

By W. BRIDGES-ADAMS

SIR FRANK BENSON, Knight, LL.D. and holder of the Croix de Guerre, died just on twenty-one years ago. It is some fifty since the culmination of his reign at Stratford, seventy-four since that reign began; the time is ripe for a fresh appraisal. This has now been made by Mr. J. C. Trewin,* and no one who has read the two histories of the Memorial Theatre which bear his name will need to be told that he has discharged his task faithfully and well. Moreover he seems to be one of those unassuming critics who really love our ancient art and are committed, in current jargon, to nothing but that love. Nor does it bother him that the golden age of the Bensonians is almost as remote from ours as the age of Kean. How far his own playgoing memories reach back I am not sure; but in pursuit of material for this book he has been indefatigable, and he has the imaginative insight for want of which the most scrupulous of chronicles—as this is—could be dull reading; the people of whom he writes live for us because they live for him. This gift also enables him to face a problem that besets nearly all writers of theatrical biography. If they are not to end with a downhill story they have to convince us that even when the hero's sales-chart, as it were, was registering a decline the trajectory of his spirit was still soaring. Irving, dying

in harness, afforded his grandson an opportunity which Mr. Laurence Irving magnificently took, ending on a note of triumph. Not so with Benson. Condemned to outlive his span by the very fitness that seemed to keep him ever young, he endured a long retirement; he emerged now and then when there was a speech to be made or a bust to be unveiled, and went back to his lodgings in West London. He was very poor, and he had parted from his wife. He was not altogether lonely; a couple of devoted friends saw to his comfort and some of his old associates strove, very touchingly, to tend the flame that was still burning in him. It flickered out at last in the bleak winter of 1939. The memorial service was impressive, but one felt that here was occasion for a Last Post, not for a flourish. Nevertheless Mr. Trewin, having set the trumpets duly sounding, contrives that they are still in our ears as we close the book.

There were those who spoke of Benson as the Irving of the provinces. Both, it is true, fostered in the plain man a belief that to see Shakespeare on the boards was an exhilarating and uplifting experience and that the theatre was a reputable institution. But they were of different generations, and in their early circumstances they were far asunder. The 'young aristo with plenty of the ready', as a grateful fellow-actor described him, who made himself responsible for Mr. Walter Bentley's Dramatic Company when that worthy stranded them at Cupar,

* *Benson and the Bensonians* by J. C. Trewin, with a Foreword by Dorothy Green. Barrie & Rockliff. 42s.

Fife, was in a position to telegraph to his father for the hundred pounds that enabled him to do so; it was not the first of several modest subsidies from the same source. He came of a well-to-do and distinguished family, and by way of Winchester and New College he passed lightly from Clytemnestra in Balliol hall to Paris in *Romeo and Juliet* at the Lyceum: a silver spoon young man, one might say, if an ardent one. That was twenty-four years after Irving had begun his unrelenting upward climb with a disastrous performance in Sunderland. Nor were the two men alike as actors. Irving was a romantic; self-taught, he might have benefited by a spell at the *Comédie française*. Benson, by temperament and upbringing a classic, certainly would. Instead he submitted himself, in preparation for the Lyceum, to a number of experts whose conflicting methods may well have left their mark on his voice and style. Even as a swordsman he was too point-device for Irving, who at rehearsal disarmed him instantly and said 'Die, me boy, die'. Irving, no man for games, was a master of the art of mime. Benson was a redoubtable athlete. Almost to the end of his days he could do his standing jump over the table as Petruchio. But in that feat of gymnastics there was not the same dramatic relevancy as when Irving, as the drunken Dubosc, kicked a chair to pieces with impeccable timing.

The new actor-manager was twenty-five, and had exactly eight months' professional experience behind him; he was to become renowned as a trainer of actors but he never, some said, completely trained himself. He had no head for business, and his accounts were habitually in confusion until in the fulness of time the wise and urbane Bill Savery took charge of them. His qualifications for leadership were of a different order: his breeding, his physique and stamina, his high crusading spirit; above all there was a light of vision in him, irradiating the whole man, that the vicissitudes of the

road could never dim. You will find all these attributes in Hugh Rivière's painting of him; that vibrant youth in running-shorts was in fact fifty-two at the time.

His ideas about the staging of Shakespeare were largely those of Irving's day. To anyone who seeks to know what a Benson show looked like in performance the few existing photographs are a very poor guide. Stage photography was in its infancy. It was possible to obtain a record of a setting by turning on all the stage and auditorium lights and leaving the shutter open for a considerable time; but for a scene in action the magnesium flash was used, and the result was as a rule distressingly harsh. Even the elaborate installation that supplanted the flashlight was unselective, destroying all mystery. It is only in recent years that we have become able to reproduce what an audience actually sees, or is made to think it sees.

We have to picture these productions in their own lighting. When we read, in a Benson prompt-book, 'Gas down, limes blue' we may fancy we are half-way back to the 'Lamps down' of Mr. Crummles. But there were ten or twelve limes at the old Memorial Theatre, with men in charge of them who knew their business; and gas, in the right hands, was by no means a crude illuminant. At the new Her Majesty's it was observed that Tree, with electricity at his disposal, could not rival the soft brilliance, nor the chiaroscuro, of the gas-lit Lyceum. And the painters who worked within the limitations of this warm, festive light achieved effects of a delicacy no water-colourist would despise. Many of Benson's backcloths were so faint that one could hardly tell what was on them until the gas-battens brought them to life and the gas-limes made them glow.

In some respects he could do things more handsomely than we can now afford. With sixty-four 'extras' in *Antony and Cleopatra* he must have had nearly a hundred performers on the stage, even more perhaps in *Julius*

Caesar; but in every town he visited there were reliable citizens who were proud to walk on for the price of three pints of mild-and-bitter. His *Merry Wives* would have brought him before the Bench today, although I doubt whether the tiny children he engaged were any the worse for their evening's excitement. Then, also, there was the band: a score or so of instrumentalists with brass enough to raise the roof at need. These shows opened with the swing and drive of a good musical; the play was held in the embrace of the music, and the actors' voices had to be of corresponding scale. A time came when we deplored this quasi-operatic treatment of Shakespeare; now there are signs that we might gladly revert to it, if we had the money.

It is not only the scale of the Bensonians' voices that I sometimes miss today, remembering such glorious explosions of mere sound as the 'Banished' of Murray Carrington's—or Basil Rathbone's—Romeo, and Dorothy Green's 'O withered is the garland of the war!' They had a spaciousness of personality, too, that amply filled the proscenium frame; the alleged intimacy of the apron stage would have meant, I suspect, very little to them. They were accustomed to 'putting themselves across' to a provincial pit and gallery, and they had not been tamed by the discipline of the studios. They did not appear to have been drilled; their perfect co-ordination seemed to be the natural outcome of their having played together years on end. Rather simple souls, we might think them, and reprehensibly unaware how complicated Shakespeare can be made if one burrows deep enough in search of hidden meanings. At all events they never attempted to outdo him in psychological profundity; it would not have occurred to Benson, as it has to some bright minds since, that the root of Iago's trouble was an unnatural passion for the Moor. We might find George Weir's Falstaff a very naive creation compared with the stupendous thing

that Baliol Holloway was to make of him one day. We might cavil at a text that was imperfectly pure in one sense and too zealously pure in another: Shakespeare's whores were demoted to wantons. But a Victorian player who was spacious enough could by-pass Victorian prudery. Stratford did not readily forgive, and assuredly did not forget, Mrs. Benson's Doll Tearsheet.

There was a rough grace in their action that went better with togas and chain-mail than with west-end suitings. They conformed unquestioningly to Shakespeare's notion of a gentleman. Being themselves in receipt of four pounds ten a week, less or more, they tossed their purses of stage-money to underlings with a nonchalance that might have won the approval of Sir Philip Sidney or the Earl of Southampton. Their Yorkist and Lancastrian lords were veritable lords, with a habit of command and a firm insistence on degree. Their Rome was the Eternal City herself as seen through Plutarch's eyes by enthusiastic Englishmen of the Renaissance; in the Roman plays they persuaded us that they were of finer fibre than ourselves. It was the same with the women. A Bensonian Desdemona was not a wistful little darling foredoomed to a dismal end; she was a mettlesome patrician, the catch of the Venetian season, who atoned with dignity for defying the social code. In short, if the word may be permitted, she was a lady.

This largeness of spirit was no doubt innate in men like Asche and Rodney, women like Dorothy Green and Ethel Carrington, but it came to be the recognized mark of all who served with Benson; if it was not in them to begin with they drew it from their chief. Of his own merits as an actor there were divergent views. According to many his top-note was Richard II. Mr. Trewin offers us the choice between Montague's well-known panegyric and a Chicago critic's dismissal of the performance as one long howl; we have good reasons for trusting Montague and

an excellent one for distrusting O'Donnell Bennett. Candour compels me to admit that Benson's voice, lovely in legato passages, sometimes did strange things. But nothing comes more readily to a mean man than to spot the imperfections of a great one.* What really counted in this Richard was that it was regal, poised, imaginative, sensitive, radiant. It was the interpretation of a visionary.

The vision that upheld Benson through life would not be easy to define. Like the melancholy of Jaques—though here the resemblance ends—it was compounded of many ingredients; among them were Yeoman England, Chaucer, Shakespeare, a touch of Ruskin perhaps, a strong dash of William Morris. It was a vision wholly

antipathetic to the machine age, yet it beckoned him when he was sixty to the driving seat of an ambulance in the front line. These elements fused in a mystical concept that he often used to call the Song of Stratford, and when he rhapsodized on the theme at a Birthday luncheon some of his hearers found him hard to follow. But his voice rang, as if in challenge to all littleness of heart, and his eyes shone, and they were content. After the new theatre was open we paid him the tribute of an Old Bensonian matinée, and laid the laurels at his feet. He said a few words; what they were I forget. But the voice was still there, and the eyes, still bent on unattainable horizons. When it was all over someone near me said 'I feel now that this theatre has been blessed.'

THE MORON AS HERO

By IAN RODGER

THE theatre is currently being visited by a school of writing which has chosen the moron as hero. It is claimed on its behalf that it is attempting to demonstrate the failure of man to communicate with his fellows and the fact that we are all essentially alienate to each other. I do not wish to argue here the validity of the thesis of the lack of communication. I merely wish to question the dramatic means which are being employed by this school to transmit these and other hypotheses. The moron has a place on the stage. He or she can be a tragic or a comic figure or can be employed deliberately as an almost inanimate block to the transmission of ideas. In this last role the moron can create tension or momentarily distract attention from the flow of a play.

In Tennessee Williams's *Suddenly Last Summer* the principal characters are recognizable human beings dealing with an unusual but possible situation.

The heroine's mother, a secondary character, is a babbling middle-class fool with little feeling and no imagination. Though she belongs to the world that most of us inhabit every day, it is she who is shown to be alienated from the others and lacking in any understanding of the tragedy that embroils her daughter Catherine and her sister-in-law Mrs. Venable. She is emotionally and intellectually a moron. Mr. Williams employs her as a stumbling block over which the argument between her daughter and her sister-in-law has to take place. Her stupidity and false sentiment, her failure to understand what is really going on and her obsession with money and her own security are merely used by Mr. Williams to heighten dramatic effect and to increase the play's tension. As Mr. Williams rightly considers that the main stream of a play must flow through characters who are relatively intelligent and capable of self-expression, Catherine's

mother remains a minor character. In this way she is in line of descent from the porter in *Macbeth*. The porter at the door in *Macbeth* is placed at the precise moment in the play where his inconsequent babblings can create the greatest tension.

In the current school of writing for the theatre, the authors have dismissed the rest of the cast and are concentrating on characters like the porter and Catherine's mother. It is claimed for Mr. Pinter and Mr. Simpson that they are interested in putting across the theme that there is essentially no communication. I feel however that their point could be better put if they employed intelligent characters and then showed them to be incapable of communication. At the present time we are being offered sketches rather than completed works in which characters trapped in suburban atrophy and/or verging on senile decay stumble and repeat themselves *ad nauseam*. Mr. Pinter and Mr. Simpson, to name only two of our current practitioners in this field, display a fine command of naturalistic dialogue. They are sometimes so faithful to the vagaries of speech employed by mentally deficient that one wonders whether they use tape recorders to harvest their dialogue. If they do, I have nothing against this. My objection is simply that after the first five minutes of repetition and mundane *non sequitur* I have, to use the jazz phrase, got the message. I then know that nothing is going to happen because nothing can happen, and that nothing is going to mean anything.

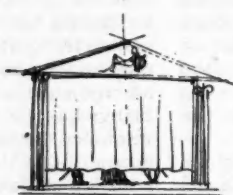
I know that there are clever answers waiting for this brave confession. A friend of mine who is a psychiatrist tried to defend Mr. Pinter's *The Caretaker* by telling me that people like Mr. Pinter's characters existed and that only the week before he had seen the play he had been called out to deal with a woman who had been waiting for Godot on Hammersmith Broadway station. When I put it to him that I did not deny the existence of such people but

that they were hardly the best people to express the dilemma of the human situation, he had to admit my point. It may serve a didactic purpose to make an audience aware that some human beings have been reduced by their environment to an amoebic mush, but the thesis of the lack of communication, which is essentially an intellectual conceit, should surely be worked out through at least normal characters.

I do not doubt the intentions of playwrights like Mr. Pinter, but I cannot help voicing some nasty suspicions. Why is it that most of their characters are possessed of the kind of intelligence that would not get them a job as a navvy on the buildings? If they want to say something useful about the human situation why do they employ characters who are almost incapable of a single logical sequence in conversation? Is it because they lack the mental ability or agility to portray people with a higher I.Q. who are nevertheless experiencing isolation and incomprehension? Before they answer these questions I should like to see a play by one of them which involved for example a Professor of Pure Physics and his wife with a First in Classics. The characters could perhaps begin by discussing music and—to titillate the Hampstead fringe—go on to an argument about the new edition of Bradshaw. Such a dialogue might not be very interesting or amusing, but it would at least show that they were trying to deal with the problem of communication on a higher level of intelligence. If they could provide heroes isolated by a breakdown in communication who were not morons drifting in a suburban waste land I would begin to think that there was something in what they were doing.

I am aware that to suppose purpose in a work of art is to lay oneself open to the retort that there is no such thing as art, and no longer any such thing as purpose. This kind of retort is of course nonsense and it is time to expose the stupidity of those who fall in behind the nihilist banner of anti-art. Though there

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is some disagreement on the question of whether the theatre exists to instruct or amuse, there can be nothing but agreement on the point that it exists to communicate. Anyone who maintains that it is enough to transmit a formless kind of tension and that the playwright does not need to communicate any idea either of instruction or of entertainment is on a par with the spoiled child who says that he does not like going to school because the teachers are trying to make him write. Schools exist to teach people to write and theatres exist because they are a vehicle of communication. If an author cannot accept the limitations demanded by the theatre he should write for something else or for himself. If he is unable to transmit anything more than the fact, that some people are numb from the feet up—a fact which incidentally ought to be fairly widely known—he should give up trying to write for the theatre.

I do not of course wish people like Mr. Pinter and Mr. Simpson to give up writing for the stage. In their suburban sketches they display a wit and a power of observation which is equalled only by radio practitioners like Mr. Stephens and Mr. MacDowall, Miss Joyce Grenfell and Mr. Eric Barker. They are currently making the mistake, which has so far been avoided by their equals mentioned above, of dressing up sketch characters and making sketch situations stand as complete plays. Stephens and MacDowall (in their 'Monday Night at Home' pieces) know when to stop. Miss Grenfell—even though her portraits sometimes fall flat—makes a direct appeal to that intellectual snobbery which makes us regard others as the idiots, and which plays quite a large part in the acceptance of plays by Mr. Pinter and Mr. Simpson by London audiences. Mr. Eric Barker is possibly a superior rather than an equal but he, like the others I have mentioned, has few pretensions. He is aware that his old gentlemen in seaside hotels and his teatime trio *ensembles* form only a minor part of the canvas of man-

kind. His near moronic clerks and musicians and his gentlemen on the verge of senile decay are brilliantly drawn, but I am quite sure that he would not expect them to take the centre of the stage.

The centre of the stage must of necessity be held by a character who is possessed of supra-normal abilities. This is not to say that there is no place for the moron; it is only to say that there is no real place for the moron as hero. A moronic hero may flatter the smugness of an intellectual audience and he may even instruct rather tangentially, but he cannot have any lasting place in our memory. When it comes to mumbly and badly expressed thoughts, the next moron is as good as the last. A playwright who employs the moron to put across his message is no better off than a man who tries to cut corn with a whip. The hero—or central figure, if there are those who find the word hero old-fashioned—needs to be sharp as a knife. Whether he is a character inviting or rejecting the audience's self-identification is a secondary consideration. He may be seen caught in the toils of a situation which has been inspired by moronic secondary characters but he cannot, if the theatre is to survive as a place of instruction or of entertainment, be a moron. There may indeed be many morons in society and many people whose minds have been destroyed by our civilization. Their place, however, is not in the centre of the stage. Tennessee Williams did not make Catherine's mother the heroine of *Suddenly Last Summer*. He used her as an agonizing block to the full flow of his play's development. He exploited the tension she was capable of creating and then cast her aside. Even in his other plays, where some of the characters might be said to be socially marginal, their moronic utterance is controlled to the point where it becomes expository and meaningful. Unless and until the playwrights in the present school can learn this lesson they should leave well alone. The hero cannot be a moron.

Shakespeare Survey 13

EDITED BY ALLARDYCE NICOLL

King Lear is the central theme of this year's *Survey*, though other Shakespearean topics are also discussed. The articles include: 'Madness in *King Lear*' by K. MUIR, 'Costume in *King Lear*' by W. M. MERCHANT, 'Tom Skelton—a Seventeenth Century Jester' by E. W. IVES, and 'An Elizabethan Stage Drawing' by R. A. FOAKES and R. T. RICKERT. There are the usual sections devoted to International Notes and reviews and a record of the year's Shakespeare productions in the United Kingdom.

8 plates; 6 text-figures

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NEW PLAYS IN REPERTORY

Some of the plays recently given their British professional premiere by Repertory Companies.

Compiled from material made available by Spotlight Casting Directory.

- BARROW-IN-FURNESS** Renaissance Theatre Co. *The Darkling Plain* by Charles Vites. Set in farmhouse in a middle-European country, this play won the *Manchester Evening News* Play Competition. 5 m., 2 f.
- BIRMINGHAM** Repertory Co. *One Man's Meat* by Thomas Muschamp. Story of two brothers and a bride, set in working class district of a northern town. 4 m., 4 f., 3 voices.
- CANTERBURY** Marlowe Theatre. *The Bread of Life*. A sequence from fifteenth-century miracle plays compiled by John Russell Brown. 19 m., 4 f. (doubling).
- CHELTEMHAM** Everyman Theatre. *Chance of Daylight* by Leonard Smith. The story of two next-door families. 4 m., 2 f.
- COVENTRY** Belgrade Theatre. *Dreaming Bandmen* by Jeremy Sandford. 11 m., 5 f.
- FARNHAM** Castle Theatre. *Rock Bottom* by Dennis Spencer. Comedy of working-class people in Midlands. 4 m., 2 f. *We'll All be Millionaires* by Roy Plumley. Set in Cornwall. 7 m., 2 f.
- GLASGOW** Citizens Theatre. *Wedding Day* by Jack Ronder. Story of two sisters, set in flat in Edinburgh. 3 m., 3 f.
- GUILDFORD** Theatre Co. *The Man who could not Kill* by Norman Vane. Time, Spring 1945. 6 m., 5 f. *Party for Jeremy* by Bill Owen. Set in a Streatham boarding house. 4 m., 5 f.
- HORNCHURCH** Theatre Trust. *The Trouble with Our Ivy* 2 m., 2 f. and *Stuff and Nonsense* 2 m., 3 f. both by David Perry.
- IPSWICH** Theatre. *Up a Gum Tree*, comedy by William Douglas Home. 20 m., 4 f.
- NOTTINGHAM** Playhouse. *Beautiful Dreamer* by Jack Pulman. A youth and his aspirations. 5 m., 4 f.
- RICHMOND** Repertory Co. *Room for One More* by Peter van Greenaway. Three young men taking over a flat find a body in the wardrobe, and much else besides. 9 m., 5 f.
- SALISBURY** Arts Theatre. *Flying Feathers* by Geoffrey Lumsden. Farce. 5 m., 6 f. *Love by Appointment* by Anthony Whitby. An unromantic comedy. 3 m., 7 f.
- WINDSOR** Theatre Royal. *Handful of Tansy* by Harold Brooke and Kay Bannerman. 4 m., 2 f.
- WORTHING** Connaught Theatre. *My Darling Family* by Felicity Douglas. A possessive woman and her family. 6 m., 5 f.

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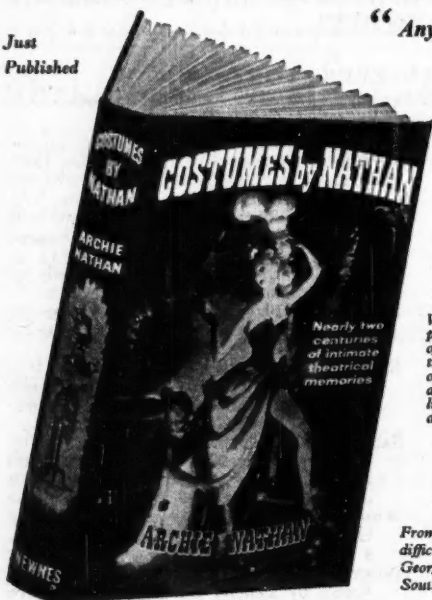
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NEWNES

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

I wonder whether Dr. Dorothy Knowles, in her article on Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* in the Autumn number of *DRAMA* is not guilty of the mistake, so mercilessly ridiculed in the play, of engaging in a futile discussion as to whether the rhinoceros has one horn or two, whether the conformism that is being attacked is of the Right or of the Left? There is no doubt that in the play and outside it Ionesco has taken the greatest care not to be specific, and it may be that this was due to a fear of possible reprisals, as Dr. Knowles suggests. Would it not however be more flattering to Ionesco, both as a man and as a dramatist, to assume that he widened the scope of the play because he is interested in the universal and eternal problem of fanaticism and not just in one particular manifestation of it? To equate 'rhinocerotism' simply and solely with the Fascism which, in Dr. Knowles' view, threatens present-day France and Germany, is surely to reduce the play to a mere political tract.

These are perhaps particular aspects of Ionesco's general theme, and producers in France and Germany who favour a realistic approach may well be justified in stressing them so as to drive the point home more compellingly to their particular audiences, just as a Latin-American production might replace the singing of *Lili Marlene* with Cuban rhythms. Such specific references would however be almost meaningless in this country and realistic producers here would have the greatest difficulty in finding substitutes since 'rhinocerotism' is not a feature of political life in this country. On the whole it seems preferable to leave the issue obscure, thus counting, as did Orson Welles, on the intelligence of the audiences, rather than to turn the crude glare of a searchlight on one aspect alone of the play's theme.

University of Liverpool. C. CHADWICK

Dear Editor,

From the B.D.L. Conference at Buxton, at which many of us arrived full of enthusiasm, at least some will have gone home feeling rather subdued. Why was there such an incessant preoccupation with age? The theme was so stressed that in the coffee breaks it became a joke to ask for shawls, sticks and assistance back to the conference room!

In all fairness we must remember that this constant harping came not from the 'teen and twenties' who actually deprecated a certain feeling (almost like a colour bar) between the young and the old. No; much of this age-inferiority-complex came from those in the full flower of their faculties. Would the younger delegates be willing to jettison the many great names which rush to the mind because of some strange edict that 'everything stops at 30'?

Of course not. They had come to benefit from the stores of knowledge of those older than themselves, to exchange experiences with those of their own generation and to take part as individuals (without any age-tag) in the discussions and deliberations of the Conference.

Age is an attitude of mind. Who has not known some very vital 70s and some lethargic 17s? If we can find people with interest and enthusiasm, inspiration and imagination, in a word, with *flair* for the theatre in any of its facets, let us give them all the opportunity and encouragement we can, whether they be six, sixteen or sixty. We would do well to remember that interest in the theatre has no age limit; it will last us all our lives.

PHYLLIS BUSHILL-MATTHEWS
Birmingham 15.

THEATRE ROYAL, DUMFRIES

From Scotland comes the good news that a famous old theatre, built in the reign of George III, has recently been purchased, extensively remodelled and is now occupied by one of the oldest amateur groups in Scotland, the Dumfries Guild of Players. This Society has an unbroken record of 48 years.

When it opened in 1792 the Theatre Royal was described as the handsomest provincial theatre in Scotland (the design was based on the Theatre Royal, Bristol). It seated between 500 and 600 people. Many famous people appeared on its stage, including Mrs. Kemble, Edmund Kean, William Charles Macready and Samuel Phelps. The advent of the cinema caused the theatre to close in 1909, when it became a picture-house and variety theatre with roller skating facilities, and it continued thus until 1954. It is now a small intimate theatre with excellent equipment, great comfort and tasteful décor. From a niche in the wall of the auditorium a bust of Robert Burns surveys the transformation of a theatre with which he had a very close connection.

Sir Compton Mackenzie, in a witty speech, reopened the Theatre Royal on October 1st, the ceremony being followed by an informal dinner. Major Niall Macpherson, M.P. for Dumfriesshire and Joint Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, said that in the years he had been Member for the constituency he had observed devotion to the theatre grow on many sides and in many ways. The building is a remarkable demonstration of what can be done with voluntary and devoted labour shared by all the members of a group.

Following the official reopening the Guild gave their first production in their new home—Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows*. The performance must have brought back memories to actor John Laurie, a native of Dumfries, who was in the audience with his sisters, as he played the part of John Shand for the Guild in 1920. S.R.A.

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The Art of Denis Johnston

Denis Johnston: Collected Plays, in two volumes. Jonathan Cape. I. *The Old Lady Says No!*, *The Scythe and the Sunset*, *A Fourth for Bridge*. 16s. II. *The Moon in the Yellow River*, *The Dreaming Dust*, *Strange Occurrence on Ireland's Eye*. 18s. All with prefaces by the author.

If the Irish Drama (c. 1930-60) is not already a set subject in Eng. Lit. it soon will have to be. For here is something quite distinct from the two-and-a-half-centuries-old succession of plays written by Irishmen, from Congreve and Farquhar to Shaw, for Englishmen to see. These plays, almost all of them in English, the language of the oppressor, were written by Irishmen to delight, to hearten and even to infuriate their own countrymen. Some of them demand an ear attuned to the dialect of Connemara or West Cork, some miss the mark with us unless we know our Dublin, some have a greatness that overrides these obstacles. But together they constitute a phenomenon in dramatic literature. The pundits have already made their assessment of Yeats, Synge and Lennox Robinson. Very soon they will have to judge the relative merits of Mr. Sean O'Casey, Mr. Denis Johnston and, shall we say, Mr. Brendan Behan. To Mr. Behan's *The Hostage* they must concede a certain largeness of heart, while deprecating any assumption that true drama only begins to stir when everyone is adverbially tight and kicking up an adjectival shindy. But Mr. Johnston may set them a real teaser, when they attempt to measure him against Mr. O'Casey. *June* and *The Plough and the Stars* are masterpieces, yet Mr. Johnston's ironic handling of the Easter Rising is also masterly in its unpretentious way. For better or worse, poverty and the events of 1916 left enduring scars on Mr. O'Casey; he could not have written the graceful prefaces that come so easily from the pen of Mr. Johnston, a much younger man whose memories of that time are less poignant. Moreover, Mr. Johnston never fobs us off with noble writing as a labour-saving substitute for the real dramatic stuff, which Mr. O'Casey emphatically does in *The Silver Tassie*. In the six plays comprised in this collection there is a good deal that could be cut, as the author engagingly admits; but there are no irrelevancies; the play is always constant to its theme and the weaving of its fabric goes on, unobtrusively, all the time.

In these days of ferment we have become accustomed to plays in which anything may happen at any moment, plays in which everything happens backward, plays in which nothing happens at all. Mr. Johnston himself has not ceased to be adventurous, but in 1930 he was almost recklessly of the Left. The *mélange des genres*, condemned by French criti-

cism as a sign of decadence, had of course no more terrors for him than it had for Shakespeare (cut the gravediggers, he says, and see what happens to the last act at Elsinore). It was likewise said, with some justice, that all was not well when we were producing pictures that ought to be stories, essays masquerading as novels; even this did not deter him. For before he was thirty he had committed himself—such was his faith in the emotive power of words—to the composition of 'an opera that did not need to be sung'. This was his Robert Emmet play, in which he enquires (and finds a dusty answer) what Emmet would make of the Dubliners of today and they of him. It was refused by Lady Gregory for the Abbey and was thereupon gaily entitled *The Old Lady Says No!*. In the event it was Hilton Edwards and Micheál MacLiammóir who proved that this expressionist frolic (and something more) could be made coherent and beautiful on the stage.

With *The Moon in the Yellow River* he came into his own. I loved it when I saw it; reading it I love it still more. To say a play reads better than it acts is as a rule to damn it; not so here. This is an actors' play, and even unsympathetic acting could not kill, for example, the episode of the home-made shell that has refused to go off—George, you will remember, is nursing it hopefully while Potts bangs it on the nose with a mallet, and George says 'Give it a good hard one, Potts old man'. That glory is with me still. But when I saw the play I did not perceive with what art it is fitted into the pattern of the whole, nor how that pattern is made to embrace all the craziness, the gallantry, the ruthlessness, the gentleness and the sheer devilment of the men who fought in the Trouble, nor the pride with which power is shewn to be a feeble thing when it comes up against a dream. Mr. Johnston is a master of the anything-at-any-moment technique; he keeps the fancy poised for flight in all directions. His early instinct was a sure one, for such art is very much akin to music. If in performance we do not get all that he has to give us it is because his 'operas' call for a Toscanini at the desk.

He is on the verge of sixty, but there is no sign yet of hardening arteries. *The Scythe and the Sunset*, his modestly proffered companion-piece to *The Plough and the Stars*, saw the lights only two years ago; in its compassion, irony and fun, its significant inconsequence, it recalls the play I have just praised. In *The Dreaming Dust* he explores the private life of Dr. Swift, with some assistance from the Seven Deadly Sins. I am not quite sure about this play, although when I saw it Hilton Edwards, as the Dean of St. Patrick's, not only sustained the part with a majesty and finesse that are rare today but, as producer, contrived to thread

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MACDONALD

his way through all the intricacies of here and there, then and now, that his author had imposed on him. Swift's relationship with the two poor ladies is admirably done; so is his mad and dreadful end. I missed only the great Doctor in his heyday, when he was mighty enough to ask an Earl to convey to the Prime Minister that he would be unable to dine with him as usual. A trifling blemish; I found these two volumes enchanting from first to last.

W. BRIDGES-ADAMS

Come to the Fair

The Theatre of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century by Sybil Rosenfeld. Cambridge. 30s.

Books of theatre history fall into two main classes: the many, that are based on other books; and the few, that represent discoveries from original research. This book is pre-eminently one of the few. It tells for the first time the full story of the theatrical booths that were established in the London fairgrounds during the 18th century; it traces the development of humble booths presenting crude drolls and folk legends, whose content had scarcely changed since the Middle Ages, into quite respectable portable wooden playhouses, patronized by royalty and gentry, presenting much the same theatrical fare as the West End theatres with casts of actors drawn from the patent houses.

It is a story as interesting to the social as to the theatrical historian. It has been quarried from the small-type advertisements in newspapers, from fugitive throw-away playbills, and from a few bare manuscript records. The plain undramatic manner in which the facts are presented gives few hints of the long and exciting hunt that their collection must have entailed.

Few readers will need to read steadily through the chapters in which the showmen and productions at Bartholomew and Southwark Fairs are recorded year by year, but the information here will be invaluable for reference. The general chapters on the choice of plays and their methods of staging provide, however, a most interesting survey of this minor chapter in the history of the London theatre. The care and accuracy with which the work has been compiled is beyond praise, though this reviewer would venture to suggest that the performance of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, seen by Pepys in 1668, took place in one of the regular playhouses and not in the Fair at all.

Reading this book gives rise to two reflections. The first is a wonder at the almost pathological hatred for the theatre displayed by the civic authorities. Time and again attempts were made to prevent the theatrical booths from performing at the fairs. Why was this? The plays they presented were rough, crude stuff, but they were not immoral, they were not blasphemous, they were not revo-

lutionary. What was there about the theatre to arouse this violent opposition from respectable citizens—an opposition that has only finally disappeared in the present century? It seems to have been a theological rather than a rational opposition, in which the theatre took the place that alcohol occupied for a later generation of puritans.

The second is the realization that during the 18th century, in an age incomparably less educated, rougher and poorer than our own, the theatre played an essential part in the entertainments of the fairgrounds. Despite hostile laws and persecuting officials the theatrical booths returned again and again to these gatherings of popular entertainment. Today there are no hostile laws or persecuting officials, but where are the theatrical booths on Hampstead Heath or at Goose Fair? When the Festival Pleasure Gardens were opened in Battersea Park during the Festival of Britain a delightfully gay and intimate theatre was included in the layout. For one season it presented a brave programme of light entertainments, puppets and Victorian music hall; but for many years past the Riverside Theatre—the most charming small playhouse in London—has seen no theatrical performances.

This book reminds us of a time when the theatre was synonymous with pleasure, merry-making and popular amusement; when there was no divorce between the people and the playhouse. To those who search into the past it will be a signpost to many fascinating discoveries; to those who would recreate a popular theatre in England it will be a beacon, lighting the way to the rediscovery of a lost heritage.

GEORGE SPEAIGHT

Improvisation

Exercise Improvisation by Robert Newton.
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Improvisation, derived more or less closely from Stanislavsky, has long been recognized in this country as an important basis of training for actors, both professional and amateur. It is also widely practised in schools under the name of Creative Drama, but here the objective is more often psychological than dramatic.

Imaginative leadership is all-important in those who teach drama and the most successful teachers of improvisation have a fertile invention. Even they, however, may find their source of ideas drying up at times, and will welcome new suggestions to start them off afresh. There is always a demand for books of exercises in improvisation, especially from school teachers, and Mr. Newton's book, though brief, supplies a wide range of material which should be invaluable.

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amount almost to group play-making, and suggestions for improvisations stimulated by the use of music and in particular of modern jazz music. These should have especial appeal for work in youth clubs.

Mr. Newton obviously writes from experience and is fully aware of the difficulties which may arise when experimenting in this kind of work, and his suggestions for coping with these difficulties are particularly helpful. One could wish that the book were longer and the ideas rather more fully developed. None the less it should be invaluable as a practical handbook for teachers, youth leaders and drama tutors in general.

FRANCES MACKENZIE

Introducing the Play

The Elements of Drama by J. L. Styan.
Cambridge. 25s.

Mr. Styan emphasizes, and how refreshing this is, that plays are meant to be judged in performance, that the study of them as literature must be incomplete as drama is meant to be both seen and heard in action. In his introduction he writes of his book: 'It offers to point out what to look for and how to look for it, both in the theatre and in the text of the play. And it offers to define and account for the kind of activity that being at a play demands of the playgoer', and proposes 'a completer criticism for drama, one which embraces both its verbal and its visual and aural elements'.

The work is divided into three sections: The Dramatic Score; Orchestration, and Values. In the chapters which go to make up these parts, Mr. Styan strives to define clearly the various elements of drama and their effect upon an audience. Although dealing with intangibles, he succeeds in doing this largely because he never forgets the intricate relationship which exists between actor, producer and audience. His analysis of various scenes from well-known plays from the classics to the present day shows us how they work dramatically and throws light upon the aims and techniques of each playwright. He demonstrates how in a good play directions for the phrasing and timing of a line, and the actor's movements and positions are implicit in the text itself, and provides excellent examples.

Mr. Styan does not neglect the audience and in the closing chapter, entitled *Playgoing as an Art*, he points out that the 'skill and discipline required to enjoy a good play to the full are very much part of the pleasure of the theatre.' How pleasant it is in these mechanical times to read a plea for imaginative activity on the part of the spectator.

This book will prove a valuable introduction for students of drama, whilst it may remind those actively engaged in theatre, whether as actors, producers or critics, of things forgotten, or reveal things as yet undiscovered.

DONALD FITZJOHN

Long Plays

Four Plays by William Inge. Heinemann. 21s. William Inge ranks with Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams as one of America's foremost dramatists. In this country he is practically unknown, except through the cinema; a study of his plays, now published for the first time in an English edition, can only give rise to further wonder at our neglect. His work is not easy to define. On the surface it belongs to the 'slice of life' category. This description, however, fails to take into account its most important features. The title of the last play in the book, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, might have been given to any of the other three, for it symbolizes all Inge's themes: the lurking fear, the suppressed desire and, above all, the isolation of the individual in the midst of the community. His skill, indeed his magic, lies in the way he conveys these undertones without ever departing from the naturalistic technique.

The first play, *Come Back, Little Sheba*, though technically imperfect, is in some ways the most moving; certainly in *Lola*, the lonely, middle-aged housewife, it contains the most poignant character. *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, which has been delighting Broadway for some years now, has the familiar Inge ingredients, but is marred by an extraneous incident, the suicide of a young Jew, and by a not very convincing happy ending. About *Bus Stop* and *Picnic*, however, there need be no reservations. Each is a perfect example of Inge's work and of the kind of play that he writes better than anybody else.

Loser Wins by Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Sylvia and George Leeson. Hamish Hamilton. 15s. (7 m., 3 f., 3 sets.) This play, which caused considerable controversy when it was produced in Paris last year, is profoundly interesting to read. Many will consider it Sartre's best play; others, less sympathetic to his philosophy may be disconcerted by the complexity of its characters and by its frequent obscurities. The plot, however, is simple enough. It concerns the efforts of a German industrialist, with only six months to live, to gain an interview with his son, who, after being reported dead in the war, has shut himself up in a hunting lodge and refuses to see anyone but his sister. Some of the subjects covered, before the final double suicide of father and son, include the desire for power, the anatomy of defeat, incest, the expiation of guilt and, as the English title suggests, the repeated gain of the loser. These and the many other themes are treated from a national as well as from a personal angle. The dialogue is often very witty, and the stagecraft brilliant. It involves the use of flashbacks, which vividly convey the feeling of time past as well as time present.

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Edinburgh Festival, this Chronicle impresses as a study in single-mindedness, but does not avoid the monotony which that attribute is apt to beget. The theme of a small country oppressed by a great power might well have present-day significance; not, however, when the treatment is as narrowly nationalistic as this. It is only in the last act when the two protagonists, Wallace and Edward the First of England, meet face to face that the play really comes to dramatic life. Here the speech contrasts, modern English and auld Scots, achieve the intended effect. The ending is very moving.

According to the Doctor by *E. Eynon Evans*. French. 5s. (5 m., 5 f. 1 set). Here is a play for those who prefer not to look beneath the surface. A doctor who objects to the establishment of a local cinema and to the dramatic society launching out on a production of *Antigone* would be an irritating old stick-in-the-mud in reality. Not so here, however, for charm is the keynote of this Welsh comedy. Even the visiting film star, who borrows the fiancé of her host's daughter, wins approval in the end by giving him back just before she leaves. Her presence in the place of her birth makes everyone a little more ambitious than they were before, a state of affairs of which the doctor himself finally approves.

The Eyes of Youth by *Ted Willis*. Evans. 6s. (4 m., 7 f. 2 sets). Should a teacher, with a mixed-up teenager on her hands, interfere in a family's private life? In this case the end justifies the means, for, by assuming the role of detective and thus uncovering the past, she smooths out the strained relationship of a mother and daughter and restores the girl to normality. The setting is a mixed grammar school near London; the day-to-day lives of the staff and some of the pupils provide an interesting assortment of character studies, and are skilfully integrated with the main plot.

Square Dance by *Joan Morgan*. French. 6s. (4 m., 3 f. 2 sets). There are echoes both of *Look Back in Anger* and *The Deep Blue Sea* in this sombre play about a bitter young playwright and his relationship with two opposite types of women. One of them is an arty girl 'living her own life' on a shoe-string in Chelsea, the other a wealthy middle-aged Lady of the Manor. The girl is driven to suicide, and the older woman, who had sought both to give and receive happiness, is brought to realize that the young man has, in fact, nothing to offer. **Your Obedient Servant** by *Diana Morgan*. Evans. 6s. (2 m., 4 f. 1 set). A light, romantic comedy about an out-of-work actor posing as a lady's help in a representative middle-class family, consisting of a mother and two daughters. They all fall for him, but it is the mother who gets him. The plot belongs to the realms of fairy tale, but the characters are conceived with charm and conviction.

Hidden Frontiers by *Peter Assinder*. Kenyon House Press. 5s. (8 f., 1 set). Six Englishwomen

on holiday stray behind the Iron Curtain, and find themselves in a ticklish situation. They behave with gallantry and courage, thereby upholding the Western ideal for which they stand. The message, though implicit, is not too obtrusive, and does not prevent the characters being portrayed in the round, with plenty of natural humour. The suspense is firmly held throughout the two acts.

Dear Madam by Nina Warner Hooke. French. 5s. (8 f. 1 set). A suburban housewife announces her intention of going to South Africa to live with a man who was her lover seventeen years before. By the time her family has recovered from the shock and is even prepared to approve the idea, she herself has abandoned it. The plot does not fully convince, but the characters do, for they are drawn with shrewdness and humour. The dialogue is eminently actable.

The Captive by Charlotte Hastings. Evans. 6s. (4 m., 3 f. 1 set). A young escaped convict is sheltered by a middle-aged actor who has been crippled in a car crash, and the sympathy they feel for one another leads to their mutual rehabilitation. Too much effort has been made to justify the convict, with the result that the play is more sentimental than it need have been. It is much easier to believe in the actor and his wife, whose possessive love impedes her husband's progress. The conflict between these two provides effective drama. The situations are well devised, the construction taut, and the setting, a house above a mill race, used to good advantage.

The Little Door by A. C. Thomas. French. 5s. (3 m., 3 f. 1 set). A touching and well written play, which has been successfully televised, about the growing pains of the class that used to be called working. The wife, a slave to her home and her family, has remained as she was; her husband, who has educated himself, feels he has left her behind. He seeks to renew his youth by going away with his daughter's young schoolmistress but is forced to resign himself to the fact that there can be no happiness for people trapped, like himself, between the old poverty and the new prosperity. The play owes its moving quality to the even distribution of sympathy. The six characters, three middle-aged, three young, are closely interwoven.

Strike Happy by Duncan Greenwood. French. 5s. (3 m., 6 f. 1 set). When Albert Hellewell comes out on strike, his wife refuses to cook for him, lets their bedroom to a civil servant, sends Albert up to the attic where she has installed a primus, and then goes to sleep at her sister's, taking their daughter with her. She does not have things all her own way, however, for Albert sees a chance to make capital gain out of the room-letting business. The first two acts of this North country farce contain some hilarious situations, but there is a falling off at the end.

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